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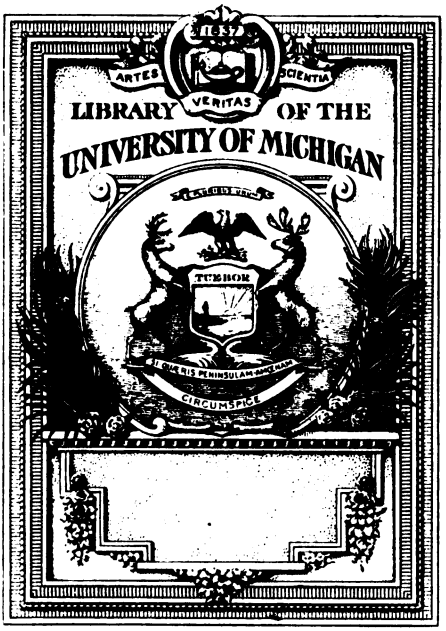
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KING STORK AND KING LOG

Kravchinskiĭ, Sergiĕĭ Mikhaĭlovich

KING STORK AND KING LOG. *A Study of Modern Russia.* By STEPNIAK

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

SECOND EDITION

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INTRODUCTION.

A CERTAIN interest in Russia is one of the permanent elements of English intellectual life, being the result of permanent causes which do not depend upon the fluctuating tide of public curiosity. Two great rival States cannot possibly ignore each other. This interest naturally grows with the daily increase of the mass of people actually and intelligently participating in the political life of their country. Yet it is far from being due to political considerations only. If with every few years England becomes more truly democratic, she also becomes less insular. People take a greater interest in the politics, literature, social evolution of the great continental nations; foreign art obtains a footing in England; foreign ideas are assimilated and adapted to English life more quickly. England does not keep herself so entirely to herself as she did only a generation ago. She imports foreign intellectual goods to a vast extent; whilst formerly she was used only to export her own.

One important circumstance has given Russia a much greater share of that broad attention and study than the present state of her culture would warrant. It is the growing sympathy with the Russian people; the spreading of the consciousness that the Russian Government and the Russian nation are two things widely apart, and that whatever be the attitude of the English toward the former, they have no reason to feel anything but pure human sympathy for the Russian people. The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom, founded by Dr. Spence Watson, is a body which represents most thoroughly and consistently that newly awakened generous public sentiment. During the five years of its existence, it has rendered sterling services to both countries in creating better feelings and better understanding between the two nations, and its influence will surely extend much beyond the present time. It is paving the way for better mutual relations between the two countries in the future, when the Russian people will be masters of their own destinies. But in every movement consistent and thorough-going bodies form only a small minority in the mass of people who are more or less affected by certain ideas or tendencies.

I need hardly say that the number of people in both England and America who feel a genuine interest in the Russian people is far superior to that of the enthusiastic nucleus of men and women who are devoting their energies to winning over foreign public opinion to the cause of Russian Freedom. This is proved to demonstration by the existence of a whole literature upon all sides of Russian life, which could not be supported except by a large body of readers. It has been created by a vast demand, and it has had a corresponding result in vastly increasing the amount of knowledge of our country. But Russia is as yet too much behind Europe in her politics and culture to make the study of her life, history, and institutions a necessary part of a general education, as is the case with France, Germany or Italy. With the bulk of the educated English people the interest in Russia does not go beyond the desire to understand certain questions in connection with Russian life.

The Jewish persecution begins, driving out of their native land a million of men, who come to crowd the English labour market. The English naturally want to know what is at the bottom of these mediæval barbarities. The

persecution of the Stundists draws their attention to the religious conditions of the Russian people. The outbreak of a great famine, due to a comparatively insignificant failure of crops, puts before them the puzzle of Russian economic problems.

Some complication arises in the far or in the near East—in Japan or in Armenia—and it turns out that Russian diplomacy reaps where it did not sow, spoiling friends and foes with equal impartiality. People become curious to know why it is that Russia, which is so weak within, should be so strong without. A fresh move of the revolutionists revives the popular curiosity about the so-called "Nihilists," who are always the centre of attraction for lovers of the sensational as well as for earnest students.

And when the late Tzar died, all these questions and many more came up together, crowding upon one from all sides more quickly than one could answer them. Is the new reign likely to bring any change for Russia? Will the young Tzar start liberal reforms? Are such reforms possible? Is Russia ripe for political freedom? Has the Tzar the power to grant a constitution if he had a mind to?

These are, as far as I could gather, the chief points which the English wish to have explained.

The book which I have the honour of presenting to the indulgence of English readers is an attempt to give a reply to all these general as well as special questions, which come to public notice every now and then. I have put in chapters on the Jews, on Nihilism, on the Famine, on the Siberian exile system, some of which have been published at different times, and remoulded for the present book, others being new. But my chief aim was to answer one general question, which is still present to the public mind: how the recent change of rulers is likely to affect the destinies of Russia?

The time which elapsed since the idea of the book first occurred to me brought in many facts bearing upon this question.

The present reign is meant to be an exact facsimile of the past. This is an absurdity. History does not admit of such reiteration. The new reign has begun differently; it has found a different country, and it will develop differently. With a ruler like Nicholas II., changes are more likely to take place than with

any other; because they may come not only from below, but from above as well; from the fierce conflict and rivalry of the various factions which are struggling for ascendency and power. Under this rule autocracy is a house divided against itself. The reader knows how that must end.

Yet, in view of such aspirations, the study of the reign of Alexander III. is of more than historic interest. I have done my best to point out what an ugly skeleton was hidden under its Tory-democratic glamour, in order to show in what direction the blind power of reaction is trying to push our country.

In the concluding chapter I have tried to indicate the forces which are at work undermining the edifice of autocracy, and also the present attitude of the opposition.

S. STEPNIAK.

KING STORK AND KING LOG:

A STUDY OF MODERN RUSSIA.

I.

A TAME DESPOT.

THERE is one curious anomaly about the fate of the late Russian Tzar. Men of some distinction, especially men in positions of power, are usually misunderstood and misrepresented in their lifetime, their death marking the line after which the truth is first told about them. With Alexander III. it was the very reverse.

As long as he was alive most thinking people understood him quite correctly, and those among them who were not compelled to silence spoke of him truthfully. But immediately after his death a deluge of nonsense about him has come pouring upon the innocent, or rather, perfectly indifferent public from the daily press. And it was not the usual tribute of forgiving tolerance paid to the solemnity of death. In looking over the papers for the day following

the telegram from Livadia announcing that Russia had changed rulers, we find that the long acquired notions about Alexander III. found their expression in most of the English papers, regardless of their political colours.

"He was not a great statesman, wrote the *Times*," and, unlike many autocrats, he had the sense to know it. He made no pretensions to originality. He had nothing of the versatility, the brilliancy, or the evanescent enthusiasm of the 'broad Slavonic nature.' But, if his views were few and narrow, they were clear and strongly held. Peace was the unspeakable blessing which it lay in his hands to bestow on millions of his fellow-creatures. . . . Whether his policy towards his own subjects was as beneficent as his policy in foreign affairs, we need not for the moment inquire.

Through the veil of what may be called obituary euphemism, one can see clearly what the writer wants to convey.

Taking a paper of the opposite party, the *Daily Chronicle*, we find in it on the same date a notice which is more explicit as regards internal politics, but which is almost identical as regards the personality of Alexander III.

The leading Radical paper does not scruple

to call his reign a tyranny comparable to that of the Tudors, and likely to lead to a violent revolution. Of him personally nothing higher can be said than that he would have made a highly respectable farmer or cattle drover, but was quite out of place upon the throne of a great nation, and that the unfortunate accident of his birth was a source of endless misery for himself, as well as for the Russian people.

A few days passed, and suddenly the *Daily Chronicle* became "lyrical" in its praises of the model Tzar Alexander III., the other papers vying with each other in extolling the greatness and the wisdom (not to speak of the virtue) of a man of whom they had had such a poor opinion a short time before.

Why such a sudden change? Has anything been revealed throwing new light upon the late Tzar? No. It was the prospect of an Anglo-Russian *entente* which created that flood of benevolence.

The mood has passed away as quietly as the lame political scheme which gave birth to it. We need hardly speak of it except as an historical curiosity. Yet, as time goes on, the reign of Alexander III. acquires a peculiar interest for us. Since the young Tzar has

declared his resolution to follow in his father's footsteps, the picture of our recent past becomes an image of our possible future. It is, therefore, a good time to tell the full, unadorned truth about a ruler who for thirteen years attracted such an unusual amount of attention.

. . . . . .

I do not feel in the least tempted to depreciate Alexander III. as a man. The English, who jealously keep their nominal rulers from any interference in politics, like to indulge in a sort of sickening monarchical cant in regard to Russia. They assume everything depends upon the personal qualities of the Tzar. When once they have come to the conclusion that the Tzar is not altogether a villain, their conscience is at rest; everything must be as good as it could be, and only fools and fanatics could rebel.

We Russians feel upon this matter very differently. Imagine an instrument of torture, a rack, a wheel, or a Nuremberg doll, and imagine somebody coming to the friends and relatives of the victims, or to the victims themselves who have escaped with their lives, and calling on them to admire the good workmanship of that infamous machine, and the excellent qualities of the wood and the iron, which have

been used for its construction. I do not think they would be able to show much appreciation of these unmistakably good qualities. The same may be said about the good points in the character of the man who is the main prop of the huge instrument of torture called the Russian autocracy. I do not want to deny these good points. I am willing to recognize them just to show how supremely and absolutely irrelevant they are for us.

I do not know whether the reader will endorse this standpoint. In any case, this attitude will serve him as a guarantee of my perfect fairness.

I leave to Mr. Stead and Co. the task of extolling the domestic virtues of Alexander III., and will speak of him only as a ruler.

The future historian of our times will look with a mingled feeling of pity and amazement at the figure of this relentless despot who, without any personal craving for distinction, made himself a wretched prisoner for life, in order to maintain a show of power which he did not enjoy and could not use.

Alexander III. was a man of routine—one of those who must walk in a beaten track. He clung to autocracy with an obstinacy worthy a better cause. But had he inherited a constitu-

tional crown, he would never have transgressed the rights of his Parliament. He had not the masterfulness of his grandfather, Nicholas I., a typical despot, and, unlike his father, he had a great respect for the laws passed by himself. His reign was the most lawless we have had since, perhaps, the time of the adventurers of the eighteenth century, because Russia was given over to a horde of lawless, irresponsible officials. But this was the natural consequence of the system. He himself did not take away what he had once granted. He tried to live up to the absurd fiction of the autocracy which he learned by rote from his manual of State law, as a form of government different from despotism in so far that the autocrat, being the absolute master of everybody, is bound by himself to obey the laws made by himself until it pleases him to alter them.

I heard from a trustworthy source the amusing story of the prohibition of the intended performance, at the Court theatre, of Count Tolstoi's "Dominion of Darkness." On this occasion, the Tzar showed the same helpless submissiveness to the whims of the censorship as the most defenceless of his

subjects. He has read Tolstoi's play, and he liked it very much. His daugher Xenia Alexandrovna, who is the wit and literary critic of the family, liked it still more, and she proposed that the play should be performed privately in one of the halls of the Anitchkov Palace. Actors were engaged, and the rehearsals were begun, when the news reached Feosktistov, the head of the Press Department and of the censorship generally, who had a strong dislike for the play, on the ground of its "immorality," and prohibited its performance on the stage. But not wishing the prestige of his authority to suffer, he went to see Count Dmitry Tolstoi, then Minister of the Interior, who was of the same mind as regards the play. They saw the director of the Imperial Theatre, Potekhin, who had a direct authority over the actors engaged for the Court performance of the "Dominion of Darkness,' and the upshot of it was that the rehearsals were stopped and the announcement of the performance withdrawn, although the affair was started with the Tzar's knowledge and consent. When Xenia Alexandrovna mentioned the matter at a family party, at which some Ministers were present, expressing her surprise, the Tzar

turned to his Ministers, and merely exclaimed, with a meek astonishment one does not associate with the idea of an all-powerful despot: "Predstavte, Zapretili!" which may be translated, "Yes, imagine, the play has been prohibited!"

The affair did not go further and the play was not performed until many years later, when the censorship relented towards it.

One of the best biographers of Alexander III., Samson von Himmelstierna, says that the intellectual standard of the body of ministers was very low during the reign of Alexander III., because he always wanted to have around him men inferior to himself intellectually, entertaining a morbid dread of falling under somebody's influence.

That Alexander III. very much resented any appearance of outward influence is quite true, and as time went on this feeling grew upon him. But it was the result of his growing diffidence and suspicion rather than of a domineering spirit. Retiring as he was, and painfully conscious of his own limitations, he was instinctively afraid of clever people, whom he did not know and could not completely trust. But it does not seem that he tried to shun the

few clever people who for good or for ill, succeeded in gaining his full confidence.

The late Count Dmitry Tolstoi was undoubtedly a clever man in his way, whatever else he may have been, and so is Pobedonoszev. Yet Alexander III. stuck to both of them to the last, abiding by their advice and allowing them sometimes to rebuke him.

In 1882, one of the "student disturbances," rather common in Russia, took place in the University of St. Petersburg. The well-known Jewish magnate, Poliakov, one of the railway kings and army contractors, who during the Balkan war of 1877 made himself famous through all Russia by wonderful feats of swindling, resolved to ingratiate himself with the Russian public and with Count Loris Melikov. He gave, in 1880, twenty thousand pounds for the foundation of a "Students' Home," i.e. for building and fitting up a house where the undergraduate might obtain board and lodging at reduced prices.

The gift was not quite disinterested, and proved to be a good investment because it procured for him a Government contract worth several millions, which, unpopular as he was, he could not have obtained otherwise. How-

ever that may be, the students as a body were not at all pleased with such a gift from a man whom all Russia held responsible for such crimes against Russian soldiers in time of war. But when in 1882 the new students' home was opened, the university officials got up, without consulting the students, an address to Poliakov, thanking him for his munificence, in the name of the whole university. Having obtained a number of signatures, they sent the address to Poliakov through a small deputation which assumed the part of representatives of the whole body of students.

This provoked a storm. The students convened an indignation meeting to protest against the abuse of their names. The authorities interfered, for meetings of the undergraduates are prohibited. The whole "meeting"—four hundred people—was arrested, and half of them —two hundred people—were not released for three weeks. But public opinion and a considerable number of the university authorities were on the side of the students. The rector, Beketov, succeeded in interesting a very influential man, Admiral Reuter, in the fate of the young people. Reuter, then president of the council of ministers, promised to lay the matter before the

Tzar, and personally to intercede in favour of the arrested students. He kept his word. At his next interview with the Tzar he introduced the topic of the day, which was the disturbance at the university, and warmly pleaded the cause of the students. He spoke of the generosity of youth, which could not swallow such a slight on the honour of their corporation as to have thrust upon them the bounty of such a man, and a Jew. "If I were a student, I would have protested myself," he concluded boldly.

The Tzar was strongly impressed, especially by the appeal to his anti-Jewish feelings, and said,—

"Yes; I would have protested if I were a student."

The affair seemed settled. But here Pobedonoszev, who was also present, jumped up and began to speak most vehemently about the pernicious effect of the "Imperial Liberalism," which had already done the greatest possible harm to the country, in undermining the very foundations of law and order. He was alluding to Alexander II.

The Tzar did not say a word, and looked as sheepish as a schoolboy who is being scolded by his tutor—as one of the witnesses of the

scene said to a friend of his. Reuter thought it impossible to press the matter any further, and the "ringleaders" of the disturbance were punished in the usual way; forty young men were expelled from the university for ever and exiled to the provinces; forty others were expelled for one year. The Tzar, at Pobedonoszev's instance, gave an audience to Poliakov, and vented his temper against him by putting the rather poignant question, how many millions he had made by his generosity.

Alexander III. was not always forbearing with his ministers. When his temper was roused he would abuse them and swear at them in the coarsest manner. In the autumn of 1886, it was rumoured in St. Petersburg, on good authority, I believe, that he had once given the Minister of War, General Vanovsky, a sound box on the ear with his own rather heavy imperial fist. The quarrel with Prince Alexander of Battenberg was at its fiercest, and the Tzar ordered the prince's name to be struck out of the lists of the Russian army, in which he stood as an honorary commander of some battalion of guards. It was an unprecedented act of gross incivility, not to use a stronger term. Officers are struck off the army list as

members are excluded from clubs only when they have done something positively dishonourable. Alexander III. fully deserved the retaliation on the part of the prince. The latter struck him too out of the list of his own small army, where he was the honorary commander of a regiment. The intended insult was thus converted into an amusing joke, and the ridicule was naturally turned against the aggressor. The German, *Kladeradatch*, embodied it in a caricature representing the two Alexanders in their night shirts, the Tzar shouting: "I have undressed you," and the prince shouting in return—"No, it was I who undressed you."

It was all Vanovsky's fault; had he informed his master that he was the honorary commander of a Bulgarian regiment before striking out the name of Prince Alexander, he would have withdrawn his own as an additional sign of his displeasure.

The position of the ministers of Alexander III. was not a dignified one, exposed as they were to similar treatment. But men who can stand it are certainly not worthy of a better one.

Otherwise they had no complaint to make against their master. Their appointment was

a mere farce. Deprived as Alexander III. was of the principal gift of a ruler (as well as of too many accessory ones)—that of divining characters, he was absolutely at the mercy of court intrigues and favouritism. But he was not guided by personal likes and dislikes, as his two predecessors almost invariably were. He had an insuperable aversion to Vyshnegradsky; he profoundly despised as a man, Val, the head of the St. Petersburg police, and he cordially hated a minister, whom I will not name, suspecting in him Liberal tendencies. But he stood by them all when once appointed. At the beginning of his reign he summoned his former teacher, Professor Bunge, to the post of minister of finances. The professor declined at first, saying that he was not used to the court and had no faction to back him against court intrigues. The Tzar stretched out his hand to him and said: "I will be your faction." And he kept his word for six years, dismissing Bunge only in 1887, because the state of finances demanded imperatively a sharp trickster like Vyshnegradsky.

He rarely changed his ministers, most of whom had a longer tenure of office than in many constitutional countries. He tried personally to

revise as much of the overwhelming mass of State affairs as was physically possible for one man, but he was not meddlesome, and allowed his ministers a good deal of latitude in their respective departments.

Thus, to sum up; his character, tastes, and habits of mind fitted him for the position of a constitutional monarch. Certainly one does not see in him any instinctive predisposition to despotism. He undoubtedly was devoted to his country. He was killing himself with the drudgery of State affairs.

Yet no man, living or dead, has done Russia so much harm as Alexander III.; no one has inflicted upon her such deep yawning wounds, from which she can hardly recover for years. He inaugurated a reign of suspicion and terror, making the life of the whole educated class a humiliation. He demoralized it by imposing upon it a degrading hypocrisy, from which there was no outlet but in dreary apathy or cynical epicurism. And what makes the riddle still more puzzling for outsiders is that in order to do this he made his own existence more wretched than that of his humblest subjects. His was a life of incessant terror without respite by day or by night. Never for a moment could he

feel safe in the streets, or in the midst of his army, or in the seclusion of his palace.

Death hovered over him. When he was travelling, some innocent creature was almost invariably killed for inadvertently approaching the line when the Tzar's train was expected.

In 1883, on the Tzar's journey to Moscow for the ceremony of the coronation, a peasant was killed under his very eyes, because he was swimming on a raft down the river, and could not stop when the Imperial train was crossing the bridge, Another time, in Gatchina, taking his walk in the garden of the palace, which was his prison, the Tzar asked a question of one of the gardeners, who was digging a flower-bed some way off. The gardener threw his spade on the sod and hastened to the Tzar, but before he could approach him he was shot dead by the sentinel, who from the post of observation on the wall could not hear the Tzar's voice, but only saw a man approaching him hurriedly, and suspected a plot.

A much grimmer story is circulated about Baron Reutern, a relative of the minister of that name, who it is asserted was shot by the Tzar himself in a moment of suspicious terror. The young man was smoking a cigarette, and when

the Tzar unexpectedly entered the guard-room, he hastily put it behind his back. The Tzar, haunted as he was by fear and suspicion, at once concluded that he was about to throw a bomb at him, and shot him dead.

Fear did not leave him even at the doors of churches.

A friend of mine who happened to see him at the Thanksgiving Mass in the Kazan Cathedral, in 1888, told me the following incident. After the service was over a crowd of students, especially selected for this purpose by Delianov, the Minister of Public Education, moved toward the Tzar, and surrounded him in a body, making all sorts of demonstrations of servile reverence, some of them trying to kiss his hands. But the hero of this demonstration stood pale as death, and for some time could not say a word. His first thought was that it was a body of conspirators who surrounded him, and that his last moment had come. It took him some time to realize his mistake. When at last he recovered, he began in a broken, tremulous, utterly unkingly voice to thank the students, saying that he would not forget it. In fact, Delianov, no less successful than Count Dmitry Tolstoi, in stifling the youth of Russia, though his dis-

missal was expected daily, was confirmed in his post, and received in 1889 the title of count.

After the Borki catastrophe, the Tzar's nerves gave way completely, and his life during the last years of his reign, as shown by recent revelations, must have been something almost unendurable. In fact the constant nervous tension went a long way towards ruining his herculean constitution and towards hastening his end.

He could never get over the nervous shock the wrecking of the train at Borki gave him. Every insignificant accident, an unusual noise in the night, the appearance of a stranger, upset him, calling forth all his terrors. Yet he clung to the wretchedness of power, whilst with one word he might have made himself as safe as any king or queen in Europe.

How could such a thing be? Is autocracy such an absolute necessity for Russia that no matter how badly it works out, no European form of government can be thought of? And if freedom is a possible remedy, why was he so reluctant to try administering a small dose of it?

It is a not uncommon opinion that it was the terrible death of his father which forced Alexander III. into the line of stolid, unflinching reaction. Was not it so in reality?

To the above questions and a number of others connected with them, the answer will be found later on. I will begin with the last question which comes first in historical order, and can be dismissed very briefly.

No, the tragedy of March 13th, 1881, did not determine Alexander III.'s internal policy, which was fixed in his mind long before his accession to the throne. On the contrary the fierce outburst of discontent, which culminated in the murder of Alexander II., seemed to have thrown Alexander III. off his balance and for some time a change of policy seemed possible. But that hesitation passed with the suppression of the movement which created it. The old ideas and the old influences took the upper hand, and the internal policy of Alexander III. took its definite shape, which it would have assumed at once, had the revolutionary outburst never taken place. It was then and only then that the Government was able to avail itself of its victory and point to the past as an excuse for the tyranny of the present. Every war is a game of chance, and those who do not win have to lose. The events of 1879-83 have served as a lesson which will not be lost upon the Russian opposition. They have proved that

extreme parties and extreme methods alone cannot overthrow a government. The part of the Nihilists was that which artillery plays in modern battles. They shook the enemy's ranks, they sowed consternation in its midst and paved the way for a general attack. If it did not follow and the enemy was allowed to rally and strengthen its position once again, the blame is to be laid upon those who did not take advantage of the chance offered to them, and not upon those who created that chance. But let us return to Alexander III.

II.

THE TZAR MUJIK.

UPON the late Tzar, as heir to the throne, we have a very interesting and exhaustive study from the pen of Turghenev himself, who knew him personally, as did many of his intimate friends, from whom he got very accurate information as to his views and plans. With such materials, and his wonderful insight into the character of men, he was able, not only to draw his portrait, but to trace out the whole of his future policy. The surprising correctness of Turghenev's forecasts as to the acts of Alexander III., vouches for the correctness of the whole picture. This character sketch appeared anonymously in Madame Adam's "Revue Politique et Litteraire," soon after the accession of Alexander III. to the throne. Turghenev admitted freely to his friends the authorship of this article, but his name was not mentioned in connection with its publication, and it was not incorporated in his works.

Although very complimentary, the portrait has its lights and shadows, and represents the figure of a simple mortal, whilst a Russian is allowed to portray the Tzar only in the old symbolical Egyptian style—i.e. as the ancient artists of the old Nile painted their Pharaohs: huge figures, all lights, covering the whole field of the picture, without the slightest regard to perspective or reality.

The most interesting part of Turghenev's study, which, as far as I know, has been overlooked by all the numerous biographers of Alexander III., is that which refers to his political programme. Turghenev says that this programme of intended reforms was cherished in his mind for many years, so that his informant was able to give him all its chief items. These are:—

1. Considerable reduction of the land redemption money, paid by the peasants to the State, which acted as intermediary between them and their former masters.

2. A radical change in the system of taxation which pressed too heavily upon the peasantry.

3. Abolition of the capitation tax, which peasants alone (and petty artisans and burghers of the towns) had to pay.

4. Measures for facilitating the migration of peasants from the provinces, where land became scanty to those where it was plentiful and free.

5. Reform of the passport system with a view of giving the peasants greater facilities in moving from place to place in search of employment.

6. The foundation of rural banks, which would relieve the peasants from the scourge of petty usurers, swarming in the rural districts, and eating up, like locusts, the substance of the peasantry.

Most of these reforms have been more or less realized, in a queer way sometimes, as we shall presently see. But this was due to pressure of outward circumstances, and not to the will of the Tzar. All were discussed at his private council. There is no doubt, therefore, that they were in his mind when Turghenev wrote about him. And these were the only points of his politics upon which he has made up his mind. Everything else, according to Turghenev, was vague, and to be determined by circumstances.

Thus we have a full programme of reforms for the exclusive benefit of the peasants.

In discussing the future foreign policy of Alex-

ander III., Turghenev foretells that it will be that of non-interference, rather of aloofness, because he says the Tzar is really indifferent to all that is not Russian. "He is, above all things, a Russian, and nothing but a Russian, his whole heart being given to Russia alone."

It is not exactly so. To Russia, as a whole, i.e. as a nation embodying a certain culture of its own, having certain aspirations and common characteristics, moral and intellectual, he was as indifferent as to Germany or to France. He loved only the peasants, who represented for him the whole of Russia. He wanted to be the Tzar of the peasants, says Turghenev. The name of Tzar Mujik, which was given to him later on, and which he himself liked to use, is not to be found in Turghenev's article, but the idea is there.

Alexander III. was a mujik on the throne, a title which is certainly a compliment in our Democratic age. But it is an unmixed compliment only, if we are prepared to admit that a mujik taken from the plough would make a good minister of the interior, or of public education; or that the democracy of England would benefit by a law prescribing that all

Members of Parliament should be elected from the class of agricultural labourers. Alexander III. was a mujik by his political creed, as well as by his sympathies.

All heirs are naturally prone to take to the opposition. As Alexander II. turned reactionary in the second half of his reign, his son became a liberal. But his liberalism did not outlive his boyhood. Turghenev tells us that it was the Parisian Commune of 1871 which cured him of this aberration. "That is what these things lead to," he would repeat on hearing of the excesses committed in Paris.

Confounding the exceedingly modest claims of the Russian Liberals with such acts as the burning of public buildings and the massacre of hostages, was rather ludicrous. But the fact that he gave up his liberal dreams so readily, shows that they suited him as little as wings would suit an elephant. He was born a Conservative, and he returned to his natural element like a fish to the water, becoming the friend and adherent of the Slavophils, who are the philosophers of what may be called nationalist Conservatism.

The Slavophils have been so much talked about in the English press during the reign of

Alexander III., and they came so much to the front at its beginning, that it is worth our while to stop for a moment to explain the real character of this party, which is quite unique of its kind.

The English know it in connection with foreign affairs, as a party representing the grasping tendencies of the Russian autocracy, chiefly among the Slavonic populations of Turkey and Austria, and having for its object the unification of all Slavonic races in one huge State, under the sceptre of the Tzar. Thus the *Panslavists* are confounded with the *Slavophils*, whilst the two parties are fundamentally distinct. The original Slavophils did not care for invading the West, their chief object being to purge Russia herself of the Western element which has invaded her. Their doctrine can be described as nationalism run mad. The Russian people, the Russian institutions, the orthodox church, and all that was genuinely Russian seemed to them so much superior to everything they saw among the Western nations, that, according to them, any borrowing or adaptation of Western ideas by Russians, could but spoil their ideal perfection. Thus they stood in opposition to the Government, which Peter the

Great had transformed into a bureacracy on the German pattern.

It is very interesting that this school of Chinese exclusiveness and self-sufficiency was founded by very gifted men of the highest European culture of the epoch, such as Homiakov, Samarin, the brothers Kireievsky, and the brothers Aksakov, Konstantin, who was the actual leader of the party in its palmy days, and the famous Ivan, who gradually came to terms with the Government.

All these men had at their finger's end the philosophy of Hegel, which was the gospel of their time, and may be described as followers of Fichte, whose ideas of the Messiah-like mission of the German people they were fully justified in twisting to suit their own ends.

If Fichte was right in asserting that the German race, being free from the influence of the Greco-Roman culture, was destined to build up a new civilization superior to that of the Latin race, the Russians clearly had the same advantage in a much higher degree. It was only from the time of Peter the Great that Russia had been spoiled by any culture at all, and at the epoch when the Slavophils began to preach, the disease, thank heaven, had not

advanced far. As to the masses of the Russian people, the millions of peasants, they were as yet perfectly untouched by it. Russia's chances were not yet lost if only she would adopt the programme of the Slavophils, which was very simple: to turn for guidance in ethics, religion, and family life to the peasants, who had preserved in their primitive purity all the high, truly national ideals of life. In politics, they advocated return to the forms anterior to the destructive work of Peter the Great, i.e. to the Muscovite period of Russian history, which the Slavophils idealized beyond all reason, with that perfect disregard of documentary evidence characteristic of fanatics.

Of the first half of this programme I will not speak, because it is outside the immediate object of my book. Count Tolstoi is the last incarnation of this side of the old slavophilism, and I can refer the reader to his latter-day pamphlets, and stories, which explain what is meant by that seeking for moral truth in the hearts of the lowly.

But the political programme of the Slavophils deserves a closer examination, for it bears in many ways upon the question of modern Russian history.

The Muscovite monarchy was a gloomy, semi-theocratic, semi-patriarchal despotism, on the high-road to becoming a sort of petrified bureaucracy. Fierce, implacable persecution of the slightest independence of thought in religion, politics, philosophy, or even manners, was one of its chief characteristics. But the Slavophils overlook that as an accident, representing the Muscovite times as a sort of patriarchal idyll of a perfect harmony and mutual confidence between the rulers and the ruled. And we will not grudge them this little travesty of history, because we owe to it all that was good in the political programme of the Slavophils. Whilst vehemently defending the autocratic form of government as a national glory, the Slavophils declared themselves against the censorship and all restriction upon liberty of speech, which they considered as a manifestation of diffidence and suspicion alien to the spirit of a truly paternal government.

We have a very interesting document from the pen of Konstantin Aksakoff, the founder of Slavophilism, which presents an excellent summing up of the political philosophy and practical demands of the Slavophils. It is Aksakoff's "memorandum" which was presented through

Count Bludov to Alexander II. soon after his accession to the throne in 1855.

The memorandum is divided into three parts. In the first, the exordium, Konstantin Aksakoff explains the reason why he found it necessary to present his memorandum just then.

"Sire! Thou hast ascended the throne. These first instants are precious and of import, not for thee only, but for thy subjects also. Invested on a sudden with the dignity of sovereignty, thou hast not yet grown used to being Tzar. Thy spiritual hearing has all its freshness and delicacy, thy spiritual vision all its keenness and far-sightedness; both hearing and vision are more highly strained in these first moments of sovereign rule than at any other time. We trust that thou wilt ever strain all the forces of thy spirit to learn the truth for thy people's weal. But every period has a significance and glory peculiarly its own; and this is that of these first instants of Imperial power, the freshness and delicacy of which can never come again."

Then follows the exposition of the general views of the Slavophils, which are summed up in the third part in fifteen paragraphs, which I will give here, omitting some repetitions.

"I. The Russian people, containing no political elements within itself, has divested itself of supreme power, and has no desire to govern.

"II. Having no desire for rule, the Russian people assigns to the Government unlimited power.

"III. In return for this, the Russian people reserves to itself moral liberty, liberty of life and of conscience.

"IV. Unlimited power without the participation of the people can but take the form of absolute monarchy.

"V. The Russian state organization rests on the basis of the following principles: for the Government (necessarily monarchical in form), absolute governing political power; for the people, complete moral liberty—liberty of life and conscience, of thought and of word. The sole thing which the people, destitute of power, can and ought of their own initiative to offer to the all-powerful Government is *opinion* (consequently a purely moral force), and this the Government is free to accept or to refuse.

"VI. These essential principles may be violated either on the one side or on the other.

"VII. Through the violation of these principles on the part of the people, through the limitation

of the power of the Government, and so through the participation of the people in governing, the people resorts to external coercive force, abandons its true path of inward spiritual freedom and force, and inevitably deteriorates morally.

"VIII. Through the violation of these principles on the part of the Government, through the restriction by Government of the moral freedom—the freedom of life and of conscience of the people,—absolute monarchy passes into despotism, into an immoral government, stifling all the moral energies, and corrupting the spirit of the people.

"IX. The principles of the state have not been violated (in Russia) on the part of the people, inasmuch as they are its fundamental national principles; but they have been violated on the part of the Government—that is, the Government has interfered with the moral liberty of the people, restricted the liberty of life and of conscience (of thought and of word), and in so doing, has passed into a degrading despotism, stifling the spiritual existence and human dignity of the people, and involving ultimately the decay of the moral energies of Russia, and the corruption of society. This despotism threatens in the future either the total decline and fall of Russia,

to the rejoicing of her foes, or the obliteration of Russian principles in the people itself, which, deprived of moral liberty, will be taught at last to desire political liberty, to resort to revolution, and to abandon its true path. Both of these issues are alike fraught with horror, inasmuch as both alike lead to destruction—the former one to material and moral destruction, the latter to moral destruction only.

"X. And thus the violation by the Government of the principles of Russian national life, the spoliation from the people of its moral freedom, —that is the source of evil of all kinds in Russia.

"XI. The improvement of things rests obviously with the Government.

"XII. The Government have laid an oppressive yoke on the moral life of Russia; it is bound to remove that yoke. The Government has deviated from the essential principles of Russian nationalism; it is bound to return to these principles. They are:—

"*For the Government, unlimited Governing power; for the people, complete moral liberty—liberty of life and conscience. For the Government, freedom of action, and so of legislation; for the people, freedom of opinion, and so of speech.*

. . . . . .

"XV. Not content with the mere existence of freedom of speech, and consequently of public opinion, the Government at times feels the need of calling forth this public opinion. In what way can the Government call it forth?

"Ancient Russia illustrates for us both the thing itself and the means of obtaining it. Our Tzars used to call forth, on weighty occasions, the public opinion of all Russia, and for this end, to invoke *zemsky sobor*, or *national assemblies*, to which were sent delegates from all classes and all parts of Russia. Such a *zemsky sobor* was merely to obtain an expression of *opinion*, which the sovereign may accept or refuse.

. . . . . .

"And so what is wanted is complete freedom of speech, oral, written, and printed, always and at all times; and a *zemsky sobor* on those occasions when the Government desires to gauge the public opinion of the country.

"The inner social bonds of life have grown so weak in Russia, classes have become so antagonistic to one another, in consequence of the despotic system of the Government during the last 150 years, that a *zemsky sobor* at the present moment could not be productive of its full

utility. I say, *of its full value*, for even immediately, the *zemsky sobor* would be of indubitable value both for the Government and the people, and it is but needful for some time to elapse for the Government to be able to profit by the wise precedent of ancient Russia, calling in a *zemsky sobor*.

"Public opinion unreservedly declared—that is what might take the place of a *zemsky sobor* for the Government at the present moment; but for this end freedom of speech is indispensable, whereby the Government will be enabled to call a *zemsky sobor* without loss of time, to the unmixed benefit of itself and the people."

III.

HESITATING ON THE CROSSWAY—THE LIBERAL PERIOD.

IN 1881, by permission of Count Loris Melikov, Ivan Aksakov published his brother's memorandum in his paper, "Russia," evidently for the edification of Alexander II., whom the Count wanted to tranquillize as to the possible danger of encroachments on the side of the partisans of the Zemsky Sobor. But before the publication of the long article was completed, the tragedy of March 13th took place, and thus the posthumous work of the prophet of Slavophilism came to be a solemn appeal to Ivan Aksakov's imperial pupil. Although a much weaker man than his brother and rather a time-server, Ivan Aksakov was honest enough not to conceal his opinions, and we may assume that the doctrine which he tried to impress upon the mind of the future Tzar, Alexander III., was that which we find in the memorandum of Konstantin. But Turghenev says that Alexander III. endorsed

only a part of it. The metaphysical division of the two functions in the State—the action and the thought—was too subtle for him, and he introduced into the Slavophil doctrine a modification which a Russian mujik might, and a Russian Tzar was sure to think of: he dropped all which referred to the obligations of tolerance, recommended to, if not imposed upon, the Tzar by the idealism of the Slavophils. As a practical man, he took the kernel of their doctrine, which is the idea that autocracy is for Russia the best possible form of government, and any limitation of autocracy ought to be resisted by the Tzar on national, as well as on personal grounds. All the rest he rejected as impractical, as, indeed, it was. In this form the doctrine pleased him mightily. In an interesting letter to his brother, the Grand Duke Vladimir, accompanying the copy of the autocratic manifesto, which marks the turning-point of Alexander III.'s policy, the Tzar writes: "I will never allow any limitation of autocratic power, which I consider necessary and useful for Russia."

The Russian Tzars and the autocrats of all nationalities have always been prone to take a very exalted view of their importance to the world in general, and the countries blessed by

having them as rulers in particular. This is only human. In our modest walks of life we are all inclined to look upon ourselves and our work in a magnifying glass. George Eliot says that it is very happily ordained so, for we should not perform even the little we do perform without that spur of self-idealization. But if it is a good thing, we have surely too much of it in men born in the regal purple, with whom this natural weakness of mankind has been inflated and developed to monstrous proportions by their artificial surroundings. There has hardly been a Tzar or an Emperor who has not considered it his special mission to be a despot as completely and as long as he could. But when to the flatteries of courtiers the influence of some philosopher or religious fanatic has been added, then we see the formation of the deeply convinced, i.e. the worst possible despots of the type of Philip II. of Spain, or Nicholas I. of Russia, in whom the best and the worst elements of human nature combine to make them the scourge of their land.

What Joseph de Maistre was for Nicholas I., Ivan Aksakov was for Alexander III. He made him a fanatic of autocracy. When, in 1879 and 1880, the revolutionary movement

assumed threatening proportions, he was in favour of merciless reprisals. He would have played the part of the Duc d'Alba had his father allowed him.

I have been told of a little incident which occurred in 1878, soon after the execution of Martin Kovalsky, a revolutionist who was accused of armed resistance in Odessa, tried by court-martial, and shot in August, 1878. General Heins, who was the chief of the police and garrison of the city, and had to superintend the execution, tendered his resignation, and went to St. Petersburg to present it in person. He was an honest man, and a true and devoted servant of the Tzar—such as there are few among the officials of our time. His object in coming to St. Petersburg was to seek an interview with the Tzar, and to render him the greatest service a subject can render to his sovereign by boldly telling him the truth upon the Russian situation. He did not succeed in obtaining an audience with the Tzar, but he was able to see the Tzarevitch, and to him he poured out his loyal and patriotic remarks upon the impossibility of suppressing by mere force a movement which had the strength of an idea behind it, and of the fatal consequences which the policy

of reprisals might have for the State and the person of the Tzar.

"When the judges who pass the sentence of death, and the officer in command of the soldiers who are to carry it out, and the soldiers themselves are all pale as death, then it means that there is something wrong in the system which commands these executions."

The Tzarevitch listened, not saying a word, with a sullen expression upon his heavy face.

"Then you mean to say that the Tzar ought to make concessions to his enemies?" he said.

"Not to his enemies, but to the country, which has no quarrel with him," answered the General.

Upon this the Tzarevitch rose from his seat, put his hand—which, it is rumoured, could unbend a horse-shoe—upon Heins's shoulder, and squeezed it violently, pushing his visitor out of the room. That was all he got for his pains, except the blue marks of the Tzarevitch's fingers, which remained on his shoulder for several days.

He showed them to his brother, telling him that, on leaving the palace, he said to himself that there was no hope of concessions—at least till the third reign. General Heins is dead

now, so that one can tell the story without committing an indiscretion.

The words of General Heins proved prophetic in both ways—as regards the immediate, as well as the more distant future. The policy of reprisals of Alexander II. led to the fatal result which everybody knows ; and Alexander III. as everybody knows, too, made no concessions whatever. Yet his policy was not fixed all at once. The terrible outburst of discontent, which led to the tragedy of March 13th, 1881, set even this man thinking and hesitating, little as he was given to thought or hesitation. The first year of his reign he was like a man standing at crossroads, vacillating and uncertain as to which way he would take.

The Princess Dolgoruki, who, after her morganatic marriage with Alexander II., received the title of Princess Yurievsky, took her revenge on the Nihilists who had deprived her of her husband and of her position at the Court. Under the pseudonym of "Laferte," she published a book, by which she set afloat the legend of the Nihilists having killed the Tzar on the eve of his granting to Russia political liberty.

If this were the fact, the blame would be at the door of Loris Melikov, who publicly stated,

in an interview with the editors of the chief papers of the capital, that no limitation of autocratic power was in contemplation. But we know what to think of it now that authentic documents bearing upon the matter have seen the light.

When the late dictator died at Nice, an official of the Russian Embassy arrived from Paris and put seals on all his papers, which were sent to St. Petersburg to be kept in the archives of the State, until the triumph of the Revolution. Foreseeing the fate awaiting his manuscripts, Count Loris, who was keenly solicitous about his reputation, allowed a friend of his to copy some of the most interesting of the documents and letters, with a view to their publication some time after his death. This manuscript was delivered, in 1893, into the hands of a small company, founded in London for the publication of books prohibited by the Russian censorship. As a member of that company I know how and through whom the manuscript reached our hands, and can vouch quite confidently for its authenticity. Now, from this document we learn: (1) that what Count Loris Melikov proposed to Alexander II. was not a constitution, but a plan of convocation of notables from the Zemstvos, whom the Govern-

ment might consult upon points selected by it; and (2) that Alexander II. did not sign this project a few hours before his death, as was reported, to enhance the dramatic effect of the situation. He merely ordered the project to be brought before the Council of his ministers, for discussion at the next sitting, which was to take place on the 17th March.

Count Loris Melikov was a moderate Liberal, who dreamed of a monarchical constitution and of political freedom for Russia.

"Unfortunate country," he wrote later on to a friend, "will ever the happy day come when a Russian, like a citizen of any other country, will be allowed openly and freely to express his views, his convictions, his opinions upon men and things without running the risk of being proclaimed a revolutionist and an enemy of law and order?" But he was not able to bring Alexander II. round to accept his views. The well-known leader of moderate Liberals, Koshelev, in his posthumous memoirs, relates that Count Loris Melikov told him confidentially that "he had lost all hopes of obtaining from the Emperor his consent to a summoning of the national assembly." His project was certainly utterly unlike the convocation of such an as-

sembly. It is idle to speculate upon the fate of a project which had not been finally accepted by the changeful Alexander II., and which was kept in absolute secrecy on purpose to leave the Tzar full freedom of withdrawing it if the fancy took him.

Anyhow, Alexander III., shattered by the tragedy of March 13th, and by the general fermentation of men's minds, which infected even the highest circles, began by doing what his father had been about to do.

On the day of the catastrophe he ordered Loris Melikov's project to be made public. He withdrew this order a few hours later, but he confirmed Loris Melikov, who tendered his resignation, in his office, and he ordered his project to be read at the Council of Ministers convened for March 21st. The Grand Duke Vladimir, Count Valuev, Nabokov, Solsky, Milutin, Saburov, and Abaza pronounced themselves in favour of the project. Pobedonoszev, Count Stroganov, Makov, Prince Liven, and Possiet against it. Seven voices for, five against.

The Tzar expressed his agreement with the majority, and he seemed to have quite made up his mind and to be much relieved. Spending

the second half of the day following the council with the Grand Duke Vladimir, he exclaimed, "Thank God, I feel as if a burden has been taken off my shoulders," as the Grand Duke told Loris Melikov later on.

The affair seemed finally settled. But it seems that autocrats can be firm only in reaction to which they naturally gravitate. When undertaking anything in the opposite direction, they are like bodies whose centre of gravity is over the point of support and whose unstable equilibrium can be destroyed by the slightest touch.

K. P. Pobedonoszev, who was holding the modest office of procurator of the Holy Synod, for the first time made his hand felt in the affairs of State. A mediæval bigot, whose figure is too familiar to all the reading world to need description, he stood at the Tzar's ear as the representative and spokesman of uncompromising reaction. Being, unfortunately we must say, a man of unimpeachable personal honesty and disinterested devotion to his crazy ideas, he succeeded in obtaining over the Tzar, his former pupil, such a strong and lasting influence as no other man ever had. But, with his great erudition, he was absolutely deficient in originality,

and, beyond religious persecution, is not credited with having initiated any reactionary measures. He always played the secondary part, holding the candle to some more inventive man. It was Katkov in the beginning of the reign, and, later on, Count Dmitry Tolstoi.

Pobedonoszev was untiring in setting his pupil against the whole of the educated class, which he represented as conniving at and approving of the murder of his father. When it was proposed to start a subscription for the building of the chapel at the spot where Alexander II. was killed (which was never completed because the money was stolen by the managing committee under the presidency of Grand Duke Vladimir), Pobedonoszev wrote to the Tzar on March 16th:—

"Your Majesty, let the accursed educated class (intelliguenzia) of St. Petersburg, with all its insane trumpeters, howl around—here will be a spot where a Russian's heart will find holy peace." He frightened him with the fate of Louis XVI. of France, if he followed the lead of the Liberals. Katkov, in his paper, insinuated very clearly that treason was nestling in the Tzar's own family, and that the Grand Duke Constantin, the Tzar's uncle, was the actual

leader of all the liberals and an abetter and ally of the terrorists, and was planning a Court revolution. And he used all the power of his brilliant sophistry to prove that the resignation of autocracy would be the end of Russian greatness and a betrayal of the trust of the millions of Russian people.

Katkov was a dishonest man, using his enormous influence for making his private fortune. This was proved on his death by the fact that he left over a million roubles which he could not possibly have made otherwise than by foul means. But he was the strongest man in the Reactionary party, and its actual creator and inspirer. Pobedonoszev summoned him from Moscow in the middle of March and arranged two meetings with the Tzar, which lasted for several hours.

But the man who proved of still greater use as a tool of the reaction was Ivan Aksakov. He was very intimate with Alexander III. as Tzarevitch, who had a great respect and affection for him. Now Aksakov, with all his naïve dreams of liberty of the press and of speech, and his hostility to bureaucracy, was dead against the idea of a "constitution," as a thing borrowed from the "rotten" West. When driven into a

corner, he confessed that he did not know himself how practically to realize his plans of preserving autocracy whilst abolishing the bureaucratic despotism and the tyranny of censorship. Yet he preached vehemently against the Liberals, who offered a practical solution of the problem. His own incapacity for doing so he hid in a cloud of high-flown empty phrases about the necessity of "putting oneself face to face with Russia," "bending the ear to the pulsation of her heart," and the dangers of "being unfaithful to one's own nature," promising that in some mysterious way Russia will evolve in the future a political arrangement, absolutely unlike anything we see in the West, and as perfect as it will be original. (See Aksakov's "Russia.")

Out of this silly rigmarole, Alexander III. could not make head or tail. But one thing was clear and precise: the advice not to yield to the "sedition" both revolutionary and liberal.

A perfect chaos reigned in the government and in the head of the Tzar too. The fear of new attempts was the dominant feeling with all. The police having proved inefficient in defending the head of the State from the attacks of his enemies, it was decided to form

for the protection of the Tzar a secret society of volunteers, organized avowedly on the same plan as the revolutionary Executive Committee. The Grand Duke Vladimir was at its head, and it was backed by the enormous wealth of Prince Demidov San Donato, besides many other wealthy aristocrats who joined the Society. Patronized by the Tzar's brother, the Holy League was quite above the reach of the ordinary police or the minister of the interior. It was a State within the State. It held its secret meetings like the Nihilists' Committee, and it is fully proved that in imitation of the Nihilists, it passed sentence of death upon some of the most prominent Nihilists, which, however, were never carried out for lack of courage in the Executive. Though it did nothing particular in any other direction, it spread nevertheless with such rapidity as to alarm the Tzar whom they meant to protect. With adherents among the high officials of the army and the civil service and with its enormous wealth, the Society might easily have become one day a danger to the State, especially as it was in the hands of the ambitious Grand Duke Vladimir, who was considered something of a rival to the Tzar.

But the Government was so completely disorganized that it could not venture to hurt his own adherents by denying them the right of putting themselves outside and above the laws. To protect the Tzar against his protectors, no better expedient was devised by his intimate friends than to found another society more prudent, but secret nevertheless. It was called the Voluntary Defence, and, being patronized by the Tzar himself, it spread very rapidly, absorbing most varied elements. Its avowed object was to protect the Tzar's coronation, not trusting in the capacity of the police to achieve that end. With this object the Society approached the Revolutionists living abroad, offering them a price for a promise to allow the Tzar to put on his head the crown of his forefathers. It made overtures to the terrorists who were kept in prison as hostages.

At the same time the Society entered into a formal agreement with the Raskolriks—a body of Ritualist Dissenters numbering many millions and very well organized—to obtain from them some thousands of trusted men who would serve as a sort of escort to the Tzar and represent the "people" during the coronation.

The Government, undermined by revolutionary and liberal agitation, was further discredited by the machinations of these two rival societies. The Tzar was a prisoner in his own palace, being inaccessible to anybody, even to his own ministers; the wire-pullers, like Pobedonoszev, and Katkov, either from cowardice or diplomacy, kept in the background, putting nonentities into the positions of power and responsibility.

It was at this moment that a bold plan for a palace revolution was, it is said, formed by General Skobeleff, the hero of the Turkish war, and the idol of the Russian army. I have the story through a man to whom it was told by General Loris Melikov, during his last illness in Nice. I have no reason to disbelieve its truthfulness. General Skobeleff was a daring and powerful man. During his stay at Smolensk he had tried to approach the Revolutionary party. Besides, he had the courage openly to express his disapprobation of the policy of the Government by refusing to share with his colleagues the doubtful honour of the dictatorship over Russian provinces, which was instituted in 1879. He would not join, in 1881, the "Okhrana" or Voluntary Defence of

Prince Veronzov Dashkov. He was certainly a man capable of conceiving a plan of a palace revolution. However, as my information on the subject is second-hand, I leave it to stand on its own merits. The story is that Skobeleff proposed to move to the palace at the head of one of his regiments, upon whose absolute devotion he could count, to arrest the Tzar Alexander III., to establish a provisory Government, and to proclaim a Constitution. He was ill-advised enough to confide his intention to Count Ignatiev, whose co-operation he considered necessary. The feather-headed Count did not want much persuasion. He consented enthusiastically, and the two allies went to see Count Loris Melikov, to whom Skobeleff told their joint project. Loris Melikov, on seeing Skobeleff's companion, refused to have anything to do with the intended revolution.

It is doubtful whether he would have accepted the proposal had Skobeleff been alone, or with a more trustworthy companion. Count Loris had nothing of the dash and fiery ambition of the hero of Shipka.

When the Bulgarians were on the look-out for a prince, he was approached on the subject of standing as a candidate. But he declined,

although he had good chances of election. When a friend asked him why he had shown such inopportune modesty, and lost such a unique chance, he replied that it was not modesty, but prudence. "You know the Government was not favourable to my candidature, and might have deprived me of my pension."

A man who will resign a crown for fear of losing a pension, has not the stuff of which Cromwells are made. Anyhow, he refused point blank to be a party to the conspiracy, and the same evening, Ignatiev, to make the best of a bad job, denounced both his would-be colleagues in the provisory Government. A few days later Count Ignatiev was at the head of the ministry, and Loris Melikov was making himself ready for a trip abroad, which was a sort of informal exile. The reactionary party had played him out very skilfully. Whilst the astute Count was wasting his time in trying to influence the Tzar, by every possible means, except the only one that would tell, the display of the force of the Liberal party, the reactionists prepared in secret a manifesto, which pledged the Tzar to the autocratic policy. We have a very interesting letter of Alexander III., which throws some light upon the machinations

of the reactionists, and also the simplicity of their master.

On April 27 (May 9th) the Tzar was writing to his brother:—

"I send you, dear Vladimir, the project of a manifesto approved by me. I want it to appear on the 29th of April (May 11th). I have been thinking of it a long while. The ministers are for ever promising to take measures that would render the manifesto unnecessary, but as I can never get any decisive step out of them, and the people's minds are still in a ferment, and many expect something extraordinary, I resolved to apply to K. P. Pobedonoszev, and asked him to draw up a manifesto to state clearly what direction I want to give to affairs, and that I will never consent to the limitation of autocratic power, which I think necessary and useful for Russia. The manifesto seems to me to be written very well. It was fully approved by Count Stroganov, who also agrees with me upon the timeliness of such a step. To-day I have read the manifesto personally to A. V. Adlerberg, who fully approved of it. Thus, with God's help, forward!"

We have rarely a chance of seeing the private correspondence of a Tzar who is our contem-

porary, and few documents convey a better idea of the darkness prevailing in our highest spheres.

The Tzar has no suspicion of the intrigue of which he was the object. He believes himself the initiator of the whole affair, and he is so innocent of all political notions as to apply to Pobedonoszev when he is dissatisfied with the procrastinations of Loris Melikov. And this is done only a few days after he has inscribed, with his own Imperial hand, on the margins of Loris Melikov's project, the words, "It is very well written." This means, if it means anything, that Alexander III. repudiated at the end of April what he had approved in the middle of the same month, or that he did not understand at all what the project meant, and might lead to. He had inscribed the enigmatical "It is very well written," quite perfunctorily, simply to say something, as though he would thoughtfully remark that "the Count's handwriting is good." In both cases we can well endorse the old Oxenstiern saying that little wisdom rules the world.

Being much smarter than their opponents, the reactionaries took care not to let the cat out of the bag, out of fear that their enemies

might oust them, as they had been ousted a short time ago. The preparation, and even the printing of the reactionary manifesto remained a secret to the seven ministers supporting Loris Melikov, and probably to many of the reactionary ones. When it appeared in the *Official Gazette* on April 29, it was like a thunderbolt from a clear sky.

"It is a treason, a reactionary *coup-d'état*," exclaimed Loris Melikov. He and two of his colleagues, Milutin and Abaza, tendered their resignation. The Tzar was surprised. He had not expected his manifesto to prove unpalatable to the Count and his friends, which might lead some disrespectful persons to the general conclusion that the Tzar was not very quick in grasping the meaning of official documents. But the resignation of the Liberal ministers was accepted, though not very gracefully. Alexander III. could never forgive any of the three statesmen for such an unprecedented demonstration. In fact a resignation of a minister, not to speak of a resignation of three of them at once, on the ground of principle, was something unheard of in Russia. The Tzars are used to consider all public offices as a service to them personally. Loris Melikov and his colleagues

were the first to introduce the question of their political views.

Thus the Liberal period of Alexander III.'s reign came to a close, and the "peasantist," or Slavophil period began.

IV.

A TORY DEMOCRATIC PROGRAMME.

COUNT IGNATIEV, the pet of the Slavonic committee, and of its president, Ivan Aksakov, was not a person agreeable to Pobedonoszev or Katkov. But they did not stand in the way of his nomination, biding their time. Some concession had to be made to the leader of the Slavophils, who had been so useful to them in detaching Alexander III. from Loris Melikov. Besides, too abrupt a turn of the rudder was dangerous upon a rough sea. Count Ignatiev was just the man to weary out the public agitation, and gain time without the slightest chance of ever doing anything serious, because nobody, except Mr. Stead, could take him seriously.

The Count gained his spurs in the East, as the Russian minister in Constantinople. It is said that he had a special gift of making friends with the Turks, then taking advantage of them, and then making friends again. Orientals

do not mind deceit and treachery, if it is clothed in amiable, winning form.

But his appearance as leading minister is one of the strangest events of that strange time. With his many and varied gifts the Count combined a fancy so vivid and unruly as to entirely deprive him of the capacity of distinguishing truth from fiction. No end of anecdotes are circulating about him in Russia.

It is said that being invited once to step into the carriage of Prince Beloselsky, who was going the same way, he forgot that carriage and team were not his own, and began to improvise a wonderful story about the merits and genealogy of the horses, which were presented to him, he assured the prince, by the Sultan himself.

"But excuse me, Count," said Prince Beloselsky, "you forget that the horses are mine."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Count, "I beg your pardon. But it makes no difference; they might have been mine."

For him, what has been and what might have been—reality and fancy—were the same.

He is a born actor, and he enters heart and soul into the part he fancies on the spur of the moment. The well-informed St. Petersburg

correspondent of *Free Speech* tells us that when he was minister he amused himself and his clerks with the following farces:—

A petitioner would come from some distant town to inquire about some business of his own. The Count would receive him with the most winning courtesy.

With a tremulous voice the petitioner would ask about his affairs.

"Oh, things are going on capitally," the Count would reply, encouragingly. "Be seated, please."

"Mr. So-and-so," he would call one of the clerks, "what is the position of this gentleman's case? Is your report ready?"

"Yes, your Excellency," the clerk would reply without flinching, "it is ready, and will be included in your next report to the Emperor."

The petitioner withdraws in exultation; and when the door is shut behind him they all burst into a laughter. His case had not been even read.

This was not done out of malice, but from the desire to please. Count Ignatiev wants to please everybody, and he is remarkably versatile. He can be jocular or serious; he can assume the most varied parts, giving everyone what he supposes he would like best. With Ivan Aksa-

kov and the Slavonic committee he is an ardent Slavophil. With the Tzar he was a hot monarchist with democratic leanings.

An old refugee, who had made himself a good social position in the south of France, told me that once Count Ignatiev, in a confidential talk, recommended with the greatest friendliness some improvements in the organization of the Nihilist party.

"An Executive Committee! It is a mere shadow!" he said. "They ought to have at their head one energetic man, well connected, with a good position in society and well known to the country, and with a Russian name."

The Tzar wanted to make his reign a golden era for the peasants, and he had some pricks of conscience for having very nearly put aside what was the last will of his father—the convocation of notables proposed by Loris Melikov.

The Russian public, like the sea after a storm, was still agitated by the waves of recent commotions. It wanted something to occupy its mind and feed its hopes.

Count Ignatiev tried to satisfy both the Tzar and the Russian public by starting what has been called—very improperly—a national domestic policy.

With much beating of drums and blowing of trumpets, the Government, through its papers, declared its resolution to carry out a series of important reforms for which the democratic party had been clamouring for ten years past. The Liberals, the Radicals, and the Revolutionists were urging, in fact the whole opposition was urging, that the misery of the masses of the peasantry was the supreme justification for the demand for reform on the part of one section and the rebellion on the part of the other. And all agreed in admitting that its chief cause lay in the exorbitant taxes on the one hand and the insufficiency of land allotted to the peasants on the other.

Now Count Ignatiev announced that the Tzar would use all his power to bring about a series of reforms in precisely that direction. These were: reduction of redemption money, which was the chief item in the payments of the peasants; obligatory settlement of the redemption, which many landlords had been putting off for twenty years; abolition of the capitation tax; facilities for peasants renting crown lands; facilities for migration from over-populated provinces to the outskirts, where land was plentiful; foundation of a peasants' bank to

advance them money for facilitating the purchase of land from the nobility; finally, measures for the suppression of drunkenness, which was the source of ruin for so many peasant households.

Nothing worth speaking of was actually done, and the peasants were left by Alexander III. much worse off than he found them.

Nicholas II. had to acknowledge that in his manifesto, which begins by the statement that the condition of the masses of the peasantry is unsatisfactory. The story of the reign of Alexander III. and of the great famine of 1891-92 is there to prove that it is so. But the programme of reform was certainly a very brilliant one. It was sufficient not only to make the Tzar believe that his dream was being realized, but to turn the heads of a number of so-called Russian "peasantists," or short-sighted democrats who consider political freedom somewhat aristocratic or *bourgeois*, and think that economical reforms for the benefit of the peasants, even started by an autocratic Government, are much more valuable for the nation than general freedom. The official press was not wholly unsuccessful in advocating the theory that the educated or upper classes could put off their dreams of a constitution for a time and let

the Government do something for the peasants first.

But the bulk of the Russian public could not be taken in by such a transparent snare. After twenty-five years' experience of the reign of Alexander II., most people knew very well how much autocratic reforms come to. Something had to be done to divert the general diffidence, and here Count Ignatiev's genius for political humbug showed itself in all its possibilities. He pretended that the Government meant to carry out the projected reforms, not in the usual bureaucratic way, but on an entirely new plan; i.e. with the co-operation of the press and of the representatives of the nation. For a whole year the internal politics of Russia were like a scene out of a comic opera.

Afraid to confront any genuine representation of the people, the Government summoned to St. Petersburg a number of notables, "well-informed men," as they were called, or experts, who were appointed *ad hoc* by the governors of different provinces, who were to judge of their fitness unaided.

The assemblies of these notables had no right of initiative; no right to step out of the strict limits of the question which was sub-

mitted to them by the Government, and their resolutions could be taken into consideration by the Government or not, as it chose. This was in strict conformity with the plan proposed in Count Loris Melikov's project, but it was a poor substitute for the national representation which the Opposition demanded, and the Russian public made no mistake possible on this point.

Count Ignatiev's view upon the co-operation of the press was, to say the least, a curious one. He upheld the opinion that union is strength, and mercilessly crushed all the papers which refused to sing his praises. At no time was the Liberal press persecuted so relentlessly. In the years 1881 and 1882 thirteen periodical publications (daily papers and magazines) were suppressed, and twenty-eight periodicals suffered administrative penalties of various kinds. Some Liberal papers did not bring out one-half of their number in the year.

The official and semi-official press clamoured only the louder, being left almost in exclusive possession of the right of speech. It went into ecstasies over the projected reforms, the comedy of the commission of experts, and the silly masquerade of the reintroduction of ancient Russian dress and customs. The Tzar let his beard

grow—a thing which had never been seen since Peter the Great shaved himself—and compelled his reluctant boyars to do the same. A uniform resembling the peasants' costume was proposed for the army, and at Court balls the ladies appeared in the dresses of the Muscovite period.

All this was hailed by Aksakov as a return to the good old times, when Russia was proud of her nationality, and did not ape the heretical West.

Of course, all men of any sense laughed at these mummeries.

The Liberal Party showed in this trying time greater energy than at any other period. The Zemstvos besieged the Government with remonstrances. That of Novgorod passed a resolution prohibiting their members from taking part in the commission of experts, unless they should be appointed to this office by the Zemstvos. Twelve other Zemstvos made statements to the same effect, expressing the hope that the members of these commissions would be elected by the Zemstvos, and not nominated by the Government. The Zemstvos of Novgorod, Tver, Kirilov, Tchernigov, and Kharkov asked in plain terms for the participation of representatives of the nation in legislation.

The Government silenced the voices of these true patriots. The governors of the provinces received stringent orders not to allow the Zemstvos to discuss any such questions. Some of the members of the Zemstvos were visited with administrative punishment.

Thus a whole year passed, and the popular excitement subsided, tired out by its own intensity. The Liberals did not succeed in spreading it farther and deeper. They had not the courage to override the order of the Minister, and to compel the Government either to yield, or to persecute them in the same relentless fashion as it persecuted the Nihilists; and the Nihilists could not fill the double function of conspirators, and leaders and organizers of the public.

The want of union and mutual understanding between the two branches of our opposition told grievously in this most decisive moment of our political life. The forces which, in other revolutions, have worked together, mutually assisting and completing each other, with us have been divided. The reckless audacity, the enthusiasm, which measures neither danger nor sacrifice, was on one side; whilst it was utterly without the social influence

and representative character of the other section.

Neither could succeed alone. The terrorist method became impossible with the accession to the throne of a new Tzar, who had not shown his hand, and the extreme party showed much political sense and self-control in entirely abstaining from them under very severe provocation. Attempts were made to organize a military insurrection—we shall record them later on; here we will merely say that they did not ripen into actual outbreak, and the revolutionary agitation in the country subsided, so that the Government considered its position as safe once again.

Count Ignatiev had played out his part; he was no longer necessary. For one moment he thought of regaining the ground he had lost by raising the outcry against the Jews, which would secure him the good-will of the Tzar and Pobedonoszev, and rally around him the jingoistic elements of Russian society. But the time was not yet ripe for that; and Count Ignatiev, by his greed and double-dealing in this matter, only hastened his ruin.

It is rumoured that, at the last moment, seeing

the ground sinking under his feet, he surprised everyone by an unexpected change of front, and advised the Tzar to summon a Zemsky Sobor, or national assembly. The proposal was rather out of date. Yet, apprehending some unexpected move on the part of his master, Pobedonoszev went to see Count Dmitry Tolstoi, who expressed himself in these remarkable words: "Why disturb the usual course of affairs by the convocation of a National Assembly, when the opinion of the country can be obtained in a much simpler way? Write a circular letter to the governors of all the provinces, asking them to report upon the public feeling in their respective provinces. You can read their replies, and you will know the opinion of the country."

This extraordinary view of representative institutions appeared a stroke of genius to Pobedonoszev, who reported it immediately to the Tzar, who was profoundly impressed by the wisdom of the advice. A few days after, Russia learned through the Official Gazette that her destinies had been entrusted to the most unpopular and inapt of Russian statesmen.

V.

THE UPSHOT OF AUTOCRATIC DEMOCRATISM—COUNT DMITRY TOLSTOI.

COUNT DMITRY TOLSTOI began his career as Minister in the office to which Pobedonoszev has since given so wide a renown: the office, that is, of procurator of the Holy Synod, or chief administrator of the Church, corresponding to the French *Ministre des Cultes*. This does not in the least imply that he had any turn for theology, or that he was of a specially devout character. Unlike his renowned successor, Pobedonoszev, Count Dmitry Tolstoi's bent of mind was decidedly secular. He never troubled himself about religion, except from the police standpoint; and his knowledge of the Scriptures was so vague that on one occasion, in full Synod, after quoting, "No man is a prophet in his own country," he added, "as a French proverb has it." He had got it himself from a French proverb, and did not suspect that there was any-

thing more behind it. For the Russian clergy, whom he ruled, he had the contempt of a Russian grand seigneur, accustomed to regard them as an inferior caste, dependent on the bounty of the manor house, and only one degree superior to the menials. His ten years of office as the head of the Church administration, to whom the seamy side of the life of the clergy was inevitably revealed, did not tend to increase his respect for the representatives of the national Church. His after-dinner pastime was to amuse his guests by telling anecdotes of the gross misconduct of bishops, who, being monks in the orthodox church, are credited with all the sins which popular suspicion attributes to monastic orders.

But in one respect Count Dmitry Tolstoi was utterly unlike the grand seigneurs of our country, and, in fact, the whole of our upper classes. That was in his attitude to the peasants, and in general to those plain sons of Adam, who have all undoubtedly long pedigrees, but do not remember them. The broad and generous democratic spirit of which Count Leo Tolstoi, the distant relative of the Minister, is such a splendid exponent, may be considered a common characteristic of our upper classes, without distinction of parties. Sometimes a deep

and powerful stimulant of action, sometimes not going beyond a superficial benevolence, this feeling is always sincere and spontaneous, being the organic outcome of the whole of our history, as well as of our social condition. But there are exceptions to every rule, and Count Dmitry Tolstoi, through all his long career, has shown such a steady aversion and contempt for the masses of our people, that he, the descendant of a house of noblemen of three hundred years' standing, might be taken for one of those foreign adventurers, who never fail to attribute their success to their own merit alone, and pay their debt of gratitude in haughty contempt for the nation to whom they owe their elevation. Yet the "liberal" Alexander II., and his "peasantist" successor kept this man in office between them for twenty-one years—from 1866 till his death in 1889, during which period he was in disfavour only for twenty-four months. Alexander II. was not, however, entirely in sympathy with him. He made use of him as a bloodhound to track out and root up the seeds of sedition in the high schools, which, in 1866, culminated in Karakosov's attempt.

The appointment of Count Dmitri Tolstoi to the post of Minister of public education was a

punishment inflicted upon Russia for the participation of a certain number of students of the Universities of St. Petersburg and Moscow in the conspiracy which resulted in that unsuccessful pistol-shot of April 4, 1866.

If the whole of the ink-stained youth of Russia had been privy to the offence, their punishment could hardly have been more severe. It lasted fully twenty years, and might fairly be described as spiritual penal servitude.

Count Tolstoi went to the root of the evil. The turbulent Universities received their contingent from the colleges—gymnasiums. He resolved to apply the screw to the tender brains of boys just out of the nursery. With the assistance of the pedagogues of the *Moscow Gazette*, Count Tolstoi elaborated a programme which was a masterpiece of stultifying sterility and difficulty. The boys' brains were stretched on it as on a rack, and very few could stand the strain without breaking down. Statistics have shown that out of about sixty thousand pupils entering the gymasiums during the seven years' course, only six-and-a-half thousand, or one-ninth, completed their studies, obtaining a diploma, which opened to them the doors of the universities. The

remainder broke down in the race, and were turned adrift without any chance of utilizing the years they had wasted in insipid drudgery. And no scope for private initiative in education, no high school except those of the Government existed. No possibility for parents to screen their children from the effects of a system, which was a veritable massacre of the innocents. Russia was like Rachel crying over her children. But the Tzar remained deaf to the voice of expostulations: Count Tolstoi had promised him to purge the schools from the revolutionary infection, if he were allowed to have his way.

The outbreak of rebellion in its fiercest form at the end of the seventies, after Tolstoi's system had fourteen years of trial, showed that he and his remedy were a fraud. Count Loris Melikov succeeded in obtaining from Alexander II. the dismissal of the noted "minister of public benightedness," as he was appropriately called, and there was universal jubilation all over the country, as at a deliverance from a foreign invasion. Parents ordered thanksgiving services to be sung in churches. The press was full of such eulogies of the Tzar, and such frank and outspoken abuse of the retiring minister, that the censorship department took alarm. The

exultation of the present was a grievous aspersion upon the past. But public feeling was too strong to brook restraint. The Government could not for one moment doubt that none of its representatives was so cordially and universally hated as Count Dmitry Tolstoi. He seemed dead and buried.

In Russia, a minister who has been dismissed is hardly ever called back; this would mean an implicit recognition of the previous error, and an autocratic ruler will think twice before forfeiting his claims to infallibility.

But Alexander III. disregarded this tacit rule, which his autocratic fanaticism should, one would have thought, have made more stringent for him than for any other Tzar. Two years after his dismissal, Count Dmitry Tolstoi was summoned to a still higher post than he had filled before: that of the Minister of the Interior.

How, of all men, could Tolstoi deserve to be made an exception? Why should the "peasantist," Alexander III., of all Tzars, make an exception of such a man?

On being summoned to the Gatchino palace he said to the Tzar, Alexander III., "I am at your Majesty's service, but I am not aware if my

views have the honour of meeting with your Majesty's approval. I do not," he explained, "understand the peasantry of Russia at all. To my mind the strength of Russia lies in the cultured classes," by which he meant the nobles.

Now, as the Tzar professed to understand the peasants only, and certainly did not understand the cultured classes, one would have thought that the two men should have parted company at once. They could not help making "a mess of it," in ruling the country on two opposite plans.

They did, in fact, make a mess of it, but they never parted company until death severed their connection, because there was one essential point which they both understood excellently: autocracy.

Alexander III. understood it as a fiction in the style of the Slavophils. Count Dmitry Tolstoi understood and accepted autocracy, such as it is, has always been, and will remain as long as it exists, i.e. as a bureaucratic despotism, which he wished to strengthen by making it aristocratic.

Pobedonoszev was right in telling the Tzar that with such a minister autocracy was safe from any underhand attacks, and, for Alex-

ander III., this was the essential point. Thus they got on together, the Tzar sacrificing his democratic aspirations for the sake of the maintenance of his power, the Count humouring his master by throwing to the humble peasants some crumbs from the table of their betters.

Alexander III. had a few ideas which he held firmly. The strongest was that of the necessity and usefulness of his power to Russia. How far his policy was a compromise with the exigencies of life, and how far a treason to the masses of the Russian people whom he professed to love, the balance of the good and of the evil which he has actually done to them, will show.

From the time that Count Dmitry Tolstoi came into power, the domestic policy of Alexander III. was irrevocably fixed, so that the history of his reign becomes identical with that of Count Dmitry Tolstoi's administration. The continuity was not interrupted by the bodily disappearance of the powerful minister.

Before starting on his vast experiment, Count Dmitry Tolstoi gave himself a little recreation in hunting down the press. The farewell concert of execration it gave him in 1880, was, as we have said, something unique in its kind, and not easily to be forgotten by a man of forgiving

temper. And Count Dmitry Tolstoi was viciously vindictive, in which again he is marked off as a deviation from the Russian type.

As the Tzar did not understand the press, and his confidential advisers understood it too well, there was no one to stand between the irritated Count and his prey. In no time the Liberal press was annihilated. The largest papers, such as the *Golos* and *Poriadok* disappeared, and the famous magazine the "Annals of the Country," was suppressed. The minor periodicals followed suit.

The ground being cleared, the indefatigable champion of reaction set himself to work in earnest. He began methodically and deliberately, as one who feels his hands free, and knows that he can bide his time. The task he had planned for himself required time and deliberation, for it was nothing less than upsetting the very foundations of our democratic country, transforming it into an aristocratic one. The plan was certainly more destructive and "visionary" than the boldest schemes of the Nihilists. In fact, the Nihilists wanted to change the Government, so as to adapt it to the requirements of the democratic country; whilst Count Dmitry Tolstoi wanted to upset the democratic

structure of the country in order to suit it to the needs of the Government.

What made the efforts of Count Dmitry Tolstoi quite hopeless, and even a little ludicrous, is the fact that the nobility, on whose behalf he was exerting himself, by no means shared the ambitious dreams he cherished for it. The bulk of the nobility does not care to play any political part: they are too indolent, too fond of the lighter pleasures of life to nourish class ambitions. It is rare for them to have the energy and public spirit to take any share or active interest in public life at all. And the public-spirited minority is antagonistic to these schemes of class dominion, which wound its democratic sentiments, and are opposed to its historical traditions.

There is no creating aristocratic tendencies where there is no room for aristocracy. The Russian nobility has been a class of privileged servants of the State: trained warriors to whom, instead of salary, the State gave certain portions of land, transferring, at the same time, certain rights over the peasants who were occupying it at the time. Originally the peasants, as free men, had the right of moving from one place to another, changing their landlords as freely as a

modern English farmer. As time went on, the State expanding, and the difficulties of national defence increasing, the right of peasants to leave the land of the nobles was gradually restricted, until it was abolished altogether.

Serfdom was nothing but the gradual restriction of this right of free movement, and the fixing of tenure of State lands, first upon the nobles individually, then upon their descendants as well. This double reform was introduced gradually in the course of a century and a half, entirely in the interests of national defence. The nobles had to serve the country in the army or civil service from early youth till the age of sixty-five. As a compensation, the State imposed upon the peasants the obligation of giving them their unpaid labour. With the liberation of the nobility from obligatory service to the State by Peter III., serfdom lost its *raison d'être* and became a monstrous injustice. It was maintained, however, by Catherine II. and her successors, as a means for securing the adhesion of the nobility, which thus became a privileged class in the worst sense of the word. But the privilege treacherously bestowed by the Tzar proved to be a poisonous gift to the nobility.

From a hard-working, energetic, and useful

class in the community, the nobility was transformed into a body of idle drones, enervated and demoralized by the absolute power put into their hands, and the easy, slovenly life they were enabled to live; and certainly the nobility have not gained in political influence what they have lost in personal qualities. There is no love lost between masters and slaves, and the Russian nobility never had any trace of the most essential attribute of aristocracy—moral influence over the masses of the people. The peasants obeyed their masters out of deference to the supreme power upholding them. But there was no human tie between them. The resident nobles were perfect strangers to their peasants, by whom they were generally hated, in some exceptional cases loved, but never respected. Up to the present the word, "barin," or "a noble," means, in the peasant language, a fellow who is unfit for any serious work or business of life, whatever else he may be.

After the emancipation—for which the best part of the nobility had been agitating for two generations—the democratic principles forming the basis of our social life were allowed free scope, and the nobility, as a class, never showed any attempt to put obstacles in their way.

The most numerous and poorer section of the class, the lower or smaller nobility—which the Government had purposely excluded from participation in local self-government—being the best educated class of the community, is the most democratic. But even the richer section of the nobility, which alone is admitted to representation in the Zemstvos, is remarkably free from the domineering spirit characterizing nobilities of feudal origin. The nobility protested repeatedly against the attempt to constitute it into a dominant class. Whilst, in his coronation speech to the peasants, Alexander III. made himself the mouthpiece of Count Dmitry Tolstoi's aberrations—advising the peasants to obey the local Marshals of Nobility—we find in the addresses of the authoritative spokesmen of the nobility an emphatic repudiation of all desire to rule over the other classes of the community.

The feelings which the nobility expressed on these exceptional occasions were confirmed in practice during thirty years of provincial self-government. Although numerically in the ascendant, out of the thirty-eight provincial and about two hundred district Zemstvos, one can point to only a few cases where these assemblies

tried to further any class interests. When, in 1871, the question was put to them as to the reform of taxation, they were unanimous in advising a graduated income-tax. But the paternal Government would never adopt their advice in that matter, well aware that only the peasants would pay, asking no question; but the middle and upper classes, after paying their money, would ask to have a voice in their expenditure.

The abolition of the tax upon salt, which bears so heavily upon the peasants, and hardly affects the upper classes, was due mainly to the efforts of the Zemstvos. And when, in 1893, the Government, being short of cash, wanted to reintroduce it, the Zemstvos and the upper classes in general prevented this backsliding in the interests of the masses.

With a class imbued with such plebeian sympathies Count Tolstoi's aristocratic dreams could not find favour. So much so, that when Count Dmitry Tolstoi, being, in 1881, out of office, offered himself as a candidate for the Zemstvo of his province (Riazan), the nobility blackballed the ardent champion of their rights.

Of course such opposition on the part of the best elements, we may safely say, of the bulk of

the nobility, would have disheartened any man of ordinary common sense. If forcing people into something repugnant is difficult, forcing them into accepting a favour is simply absurd. But Count Dmitry Tolstoi was a man with a system, and he would not allow any such trifling consideration to stand in his way. If he could not reckon upon the support of the best part of the nobility, he was prepared to make use of the worst, provided the system should triumph. As a man with a system he proceeded systematically.

The Russian nobility was ruined by the emancipation, owing to its utter inability to adapt itself to the new conditions of life. Before elevating this class to the high functions which Count Tolstoi conceived for it, he resolved to re-establish its former economical predominance. The idea was a very good, even a brilliant one, and quite in keeping with modern scientific theories.

Our age has been so deeply impressed by the economic philosophy of which Karl Marx is the founder, that even men who hold his name in abhorrence, and certainly have never read any of his works, will sometimes show an amusing deference to his views. Count Tolstoi was one

of their number. He was advanced enough in modern social science to understand that unless he succeeded in improving the economic position of the nobility, all attempts to make it the leading class in politics would fail hopelessly. Had he advanced a little further in economics, he would have discovered that he was flogging a dead horse. Classes change their function on the historic stage so organically, that to bring to life one that has succumbed in the struggle for existence, is as impossible as to repopulate the earth with antediluvian animals. But Count Dmitry Tolstoi was a statesman of the old stock, who believed that the State can do anything.

The nobility was losing ground, and rapidly dwindling away as a territorial power, owing to its impecuniosity. He therefore jumped to the conclusion that the State had only to lend them money ungrudgingly, and the process would be stopped, and the nobility would flourish once again.

The foundation of a special bank for this object in 1886, opened what has been called in Russia the era of the nobility.

VI.

A MAN WITH A SYSTEM.

THIS is the fitting place to mention that about two years before that time a peasants' bank had been opened. The object of the Peasants' Land Bank was to assist the peasants in acquiring on easy terms some land, of which they were in such great need. It was the outcome of the honeymoon of the Tzar's peasantism, its plan having been elaborated and accepted under the ministry of Count Ignatiev, who "understood the peasants." But its operation began under Count Tolstoi, who could not decently suppress it, and probably did not care to, for it was evident that this democratic mushroom would not stand in the way of its aristocratic rival. It is interesting to make a parallel study of both these financial concerns.

The Peasants' Land Bank was started on a very modest scale. The State Exchequer, which was so prodigal to its rival, the Nobility

Land Bank, would not come to its assistance, unless we count as such the eventual credit of half-a-million roubles (about 50,000*l.*) Its resources depend upon the 5½ per cent. bonds issued by the Bank, with the State guarantee to the extent of five million roubles a year.

With such limited resources the Peasants' Land Bank could satisfy only a very small fraction of the very keen demand on the part of the landless peasantry.

Still, it did a good work, especially in the beginning, in assisting some of the peasants in purchasing the disposable land of other classes.

On the whole, the Peasants' Land Bank may be called the most successful of the measures representing the democratic tendencies of the Tzar Alexander III., though its success, as we shall presently see, was a very modest one.

In 1884, which was the first year of the regular activity of the Peasants' Land Bank, it had advanced nine and a half million roubles to peasants of various denominations, helping them in acquiring 210,000 desiatines. The full value of this land was a little over eleven millions. Thus the peasants had advanced one and a half millions of their own.

The operations of the next year were still

more successful; the purchased area of land increased to 318,000 deseatines, its total value to sixteen and a half million roubles, out of which the Peasants' Land Bank advanced fourteen millions.

But the third year of the activity of the Bank shows a slight falling off from this absolute maximum: the area to 295,000 deseatines; the value to thirteen and a half millions, and the advance to eleven millions; and the farther we go the worse it grows.

The area of land which the Bank helped the peasants to purchase is decreasing gradually and regularly with every year that passes. The falling off in the total value of the purchased land is also regularly decreasing, but more rapidly than its total area, whilst the advance of the Bank diminishes in a still more rapid proportion than the general operations. The Bank has become stingier in proportion as it restricts its activity.

In 1886, which followed the year of the greatest prosperity of the Peasants' Land Bank, the area of purchased land is 22,000 desiatines below the earlier figures, namely 295,000; then it sinks to 219,000, 190,000, 156,000, 172,000, 161,000, which is about *one-half* of the year

1885. The value of the purchase gradually sinks from sixteen-and-a-half millions to five and five and a half millions, or to *one-third* of the earlier sum; whilst the Bank, which in the beginning advanced fourteen million roubles, stops now at three and a half millions, or less than *one-fourth* of the earlier sum.

It is evident that the Peasants' Land Bank is not doing well, and that there is some organic defect in the mechanism. It is easy to find out what it is. The Bank has forgotten its original democratic aim. The political inspiration to which it owes its origin did not outlive three years; the Bank became rusty. During the first years it advanced money chiefly to the peasants who had very little land of their own—under one and a half desiat. per soul (taxable unit). Very often it advanced the full sum of the purchase-money to people who had no other guarantee to offer but their willingness to work.

The administration of the Bank in its earliest official reports, says, that such investments were among the safest, because in such cases the peasants had not to borrow from usurers, and at very high interest (thirty-five per cent. is the average, sometimes a hundred per cent. and more), the supplementary money, and

thus were better able to fulfil their obligations toward the Bank, their sole creditor.

But there are peasants and peasants, and there is land and land. Such transactions required a certain amount of attention and carefulness to be uniformly successful, and the Peasants' Land Bank, entrusted as it was to the care of a lazy and apathetic bureaucracy, preferred very soon to drift into the usual routine of money-lenders, which secures the safety of an investment without the slightest trouble. It is not improbable that the ill-will of the leading ministers had its share of influence in hastening this natural result. Anyhow, in 1887 the Peasants' Land Bank was not the same as in 1884-5.

The regulations permitted the Bank to ask from the peasants, by way of security, that they should pay a fraction (up to 25 per cent.) of the purchase-money.

During the first three years of its activity these supplementary payments were about 12 per cent. on the average, as the Bank did not use its privilege beyond the limits strictly necessary. But then the supplementary sums reach 16 per cent., then 18 per cent., 21 per cent., and, in 1888, 25 per cent., at which figure they keep. But this not seeming sufficient, the

Bank having been allowed by the regulation to put certain conditions to its mediation, the administration introduced, as a general practice, that the Bank should make its assistance conditional on a lowering of the price of the purchaseable land.

This meant, of course, merely a supplementary payment by peasants to be got from the same source as the former, i.e. from usurers. The seller would not abate the price agreed upon simply to meet the wishes of the Bank.

Thus the Peasants' Land Bank was virtually advancing only about one-half of the purchase-money, at the comparatively moderate interest of 5½ per cent. (with different out-goings 6½ per cent.), leaving the peasants to find as best they could the other half. The Peasants' Land Bank became an ordinary loan office, which could only contribute to the economical disintegration of the village communities.

N. Kvalson, who since the death of Professor Yanson is the best authority on the economics of our rural classes, thus sums up his detailed study of the Peasants' Bank:—

"Judging from all the materials supplied by the official reports of the Bank, and from other sources, we can confidently affirm that the

Peasants' Land Bank, in lowering the purchase prices, and in raising the supplementary payments, in the best cases supports those who might very well have managed by themselves, but usually works into the hands of rural usurers."

The Peasants' Land Bank, even at its best, was a small affair, though much big talk has been made out of it. With the seventy millions of rural population, increasing at the rate of 1 per cent. a year, no less than two millions of deseatines ought to be added every year to the peasants' property out of unreclaimed land, merely to meet the demand of these new-comers. And there are, at least, twenty-five times as many more among the men of the generation which witnessed the emancipation who have been turned into landless proletarians.

Only an agrarian revolution—peaceful if possible, violent if not—will satisfy the just claims of the Russian peasants. As to the Peasants' Land Bank, in the ten years of its existence it assisted in the purchase of only 1¾ millions of deseatines, out of which not more than three-quarters of a million went into the hands of those who were destitute of land.

But if all the land had been turned to the

same good use, it would not, in all the years of its activity, have filled the want which the mere increase of population creates in one year.

The Peasants' Land Bank does not deserve much notice on its own account, but its history is interesting as illustrating in a minute sphere the generic peculiarity of bureaucracy, which proved so fatal in all the greater reforms of Alexander II., and in all the measures which benevolent despotism has started in Russia within the last forty years.

If we pass to the story of the Nobility Land Bank, we shall find it quite as suggestive, though in an entirely different line. Its object, as its name indicates, was similar to that of the Peasants' Land Bank. But what a difference in the methods! No trace of suspiciousness or stinginess; not even common prudence in subsidizing a class which gives no guarantee whatsoever of its solvency. The owners are allowed to give their own estimates of their estates, which the administration almost invariably accepted, making but a slight reduction. All facilities having been offered for the borrowers, there was a rush of impecunious noblemen for loans from the new bank.

In the first year of its activity, 1886, the Bank

gave away sixty-eight and a half millions of roubles, or seven millions more than the Peasants' Land Bank disbursed during the ten years of its existence. But next year, when the time for paying the interest came, almost the whole body of the borrowers proved defaulters.

The fact is unique, and it is difficult to find a more conclusive and damning proof of the utter hopelessness of the aristocratic dreams of Count Tolstoi and Co. But this egregious check produced no impression upon them. The next year a still larger sum—seventy-one millions of roubles—was swallowed up in the same insatiable abyss, which again returned nothing, and gaped for more. In 1888, after three years' operation, the total amount of arrears was ten and a half millions of roubles, out of twelve millions of roubles which had to be paid.

After an experience of this kind, the wisest thing to do would have been to close the Nobility Bank altogether, and to sell up the defaulting debtors. But a much milder course was adopted. The Bank waited for three years without receiving a penny from most of its creditors, and then the Government, by an ukase of October 12th, 1889, virtually cancelled ten and a half millions of arrears of interest, which

were added to the original debt, partly with a nominal interest, partly without any interest at all.

The nobility remained in possession of its land, which ought in justice to have become the property of the State, and the Nobility Land Bank remained to subsidize them. Up to January, 1892, the Bank advanced to the nobility the total sum of three hundred and forty millions, at the rate of about fifty millions of roubles a year. To show the grandmotherly nature of this institution, suffice it to mention that out of these fifty millions yearly subsidy full sixty or seventy per cent. is retained for the payment of ancient debts. Yet the Bank goes on subsidizing such insolvent clients over and over again.

The Russian nobility has shown its full worth, or rather, its full worthlessness as a political factor, by the use it has made of the assistance received. A class of luxurious paupers, kept at the expense of the tax-payers, cannot have political influence. Instead of raising the prestige of the nobility, Count Tolstoi only succeeded in lowering the prestige of the Tzar with the masses of peasants by showing his partiality for their former masters.

But whether from fanaticism or hypocrisy, Count Tolstoi remained absolutely impervious to the most palpable evidence of the absurdity of his political plans. He pretended that the Nobility Land Bank had improved the economic position of the nobility quite sufficiently to proceed to the restoration of its political influence. His project of the abolition of the peasants' communal autonomy, and of their subjection to the authority of a special administration, composed of members of local nobility—this project of his, which he considered the crowning work of his life, was actively elaborated in the Ministry.

Meanwhile, another law, inspired by the same narrow-class prejudice, but easier in execution, was promulgated in 1887. Its purport was to exclude from the privilege of secondary and higher education all except the nobles, and the richer section of the middle-class. By a decree of the minister, the directors of *gymnasiums* (colleges), were enjoined to refuse the children of shopkeepers, artisans, and tradesmen admittance to the schools, even though their parents might be quite willing and able to pay their fees. It was an act of monstrous injustice and tyranny. By a stroke of his silly

pen the minister deprived thousands of young Russians of their inalienable right to self-improvement and knowledge, and made distinctions which are unknown to the code of laws. But the stupidity of this decree is as surprising as its coarse arbitrariness.

The suppression of education altogether might be of great use to the autocracy—ignorance being the best safeguard of loyalty The system has been tried on the lower classes, but it was impossible to extend it higher without giving up Russia's claims to be a first-rate European power. The State could not stand, and be administered and defended against external enemies, without a vast body of educated people to act as its officials. And once admitting education at all, it was perfectly useless to restrict it to one class rather than to another. Parents cannot be a guarantee for their children, and the educated youth belonging by birth to the nobility, acquire higher interests, which they will not sell for a governmental subsidy. They cast in their lot with the people, swelling the ranks of the revolutionists, the majority of whom belong to this class, simply because, up to the present, it is the best educated in the community. If this advantage

were increased artificially at the expense of other classes, this percentage would increase, and the Government would have gained nothing.

This educational restriction, unprecedented even in Russia, greatly exasperated the middle class, which had already become a power in the country, and to no purpose irritated the whole of the Russian public. The pressure of public opinion compelled the Government to put the absurd decree into abeyance. Still, Count Tolstoi probably congratulated himself on having put another stone to the foundation of his favourite scheme by investing the nobility with the double power of wealth—through the Nobility Land Bank, and knowledge—through the decree of 1887.

The times were ripe for striking the great blow and turning the tide of the democratic age, to convert Russia into an aristocratic country. The project of the new law was finished and revised by Count D. Tolstoi, but here his career ended. He died, accompanied to his grave, as the wicked magnate in Nekrasov's poem, "by the secret curses of the country, and loud praises," in which the Tzar's voice rang the loudest.

It is rumoured that on his death-bed he obtained from the Tzar a solemn promise that his favourite "reform" should not be forgotten. In fact, it was carried out, notwithstanding the universal outcry of disapprobation, and the almost unanimous vote against it of the State Council, including several members of the Imperial family.

Count Dmitry Tolstoi struck the note of autocratic reaction so well, and his anti-popular policy so completely suited the tastes of the Tzar mujik, that his death made no change whatever, and we may say that his ghost continued to sit at the head of the Ministry of the Interior.

The new law was introduced first by way of experiment in six provinces. It was an attack upon the personal liberty of millions of peasants, and the Government wanted to see first how they would stand it. They did stand it, though not quite patiently, and the Government made bold to extend it gradually to the whole of European Russia.

The ukases of August 3rd, 1889, and of January 6th, 1890, create "in the interests of the peasants," special officials called District Commanders, who will be the "guardians" of

the peasants' autonomy—guardians of a strange sort, as we shall presently see.

The District Commanders are nominated by the minister out of a number of candidates presented by the provincial administration. They must be hereditary nobles. All other qualifications for this important post, education, and even property, may be dispensed with. But hereditary nobles they must be, if possible, local ones, and here lies the political meaning of this reform.

The District Commander has no power over the nobles or the middle-class people settled in his district. He is the chief of the peasants, uniting in his person the functions of both administrator and judge. He receives beforehand from the village elders a list of resolutions to be proposed at the meetings of the forthcoming season. He may add new proposals, if he thinks fit, and strike out those which seem to him objectionable. No subject can be legally brought before a village *Mir* (communal meeting) without his consent, and he has the right of vetoing any of the *Mir's* resolutions. The law gives him no right of substituting his own resolutions for those of the *Mir*, but he can impose them by vetoing all the others.

The District Commander's means of directly influencing the village *Mirs* are very great. He can fine and imprison any of the peasants of his districts (the elected officials included), by his own authority, "without formal proceedings," and suspend both elders and clerks from their functions.

Moreover, he is the rural magistrate, judging all civil and criminal matters, excepting those which belong to the jurisdiction of the principal tribunals. Finally, he is the "guardian," which means absolute master of the peasants' tribunal.

The last attribute is particularly important, because the peasants' tribunals hold in Russia an altogether exceptional position. They are not bound by any written law, but judge according to the traditional law, which gives them an almost unlimited power over the peasants, who alone are subjected to their jurisdiction. Bondage, compulsory work without remuneration, disappeared from the Russian code with the abolition of serfdom. But the peasants' tribunals have the right of inflicting compulsory labour. Corporal punishment is also cancelled from the common code; but the peasants' tribunal can inflict it upon any member of its community.

Now the power of the District Commanders over the peasants' tribunals is practically unlimited. Besides acting as a higher authority, the District Commander is the immediate chief of the peasant judges. He nominates them, to begin with. Formerly, they were elected by the peasants. Now the peasants will only elect two, three, or more candidates for every post of judge, and the District Commander will choose from among them his four judges. They are his subordinates, whom he can suspend, referring the matter to the Assembly of District Commanders. As the judges receive a good salary, they are bound to the District Commander by interest as well as by fear.

With such powers the District Commander can do in the villages just what he chooses. He can plunder the Communal treasury, all the money being put under his control; he can extort bribes, compel the peasants to work gratuitously upon his estates, and flog them as freely, as the ancient serf-owners. The common peasants are quite defenceless against him. In graver cases they have the right of appealing to the Assembly of District Commanders of the province. But who will venture to incur the vengeance of the all-powerful master for the

very problematic chance of redress from such an assembly?

It is impossible to regard such a measure as anything but the re-establishment of serfdom. And that is what it was meant to be. The District Commanders were absolute masters in their domain, and they used their power in a way that forcibly reminds one of the good old time, the dream of Count Dmitry Tolstoi and his school, when the millions of peasants were slaves to a handful of nobles. Corporal punishment has remained in the "traditional code" by which the peasants' tribunals were ruled. But, as time went on, and the peasants grew alive to the sentiment of their human dignity, this degrading punishment had gone out of use. In many places sentences of flogging were passed, but never carried out. Thus, thousands of such unexecuted sentences went on accumulating in the registry books of various Communal offices.

One of the first things the District Commanders did was to unearth these antiquated sentences and to have them carried out. The Governors of many provinces had to interfere. Those of Nijni Novgorod and Tula issued special "instructions," explaining to the newly-appointed officials that they had better mode-

rate their zeal. In other places the peasants took the matter into their own hands and settled it in a somewhat illegal, but very effective way. In the province of Riazan the peasants laid hands upon their District Commander, Mordvínov, who was too great a lover of the rod, and flogged him in their turn. In the district of Medín (province of Kaloúga) they set fire to the house of the District Commander whilst he was asleep. In the district of Shóuia (province of Vladimir) they beat him black and blue. In a fourth case they destroyed his property.

The offences against the District Commanders became very frequent, but unfortunately quite out of proportion to the offences of these latter against humanity and the rights of the people. I will not harrow the reader with the details of revolting brutalities on one hand, and hardly less revolting endurance on the other. But I must quote here one example of the working of the new institution.

In March, 1891, a number of peasants of the village Doljik (in the province of Kharkov), were tried by the Kharkov tribunal for riot and resistance to their District Commander, Protopopov. The judicial inquiry brought to light

facts proving that the peasants had acted under great and constant provocation on the part of the Commander. To say nothing of floggings for which he could not be held legally responsible, because he inflicted it through the subservient peasants' tribunal, Protopopov was in the habit of personally chastising the peasants, for which he had no legal pretext. It was his practice to make a free use of his fists and his stick, to say nothing of bad language, threats, and arbitrary imprisonment. At Doljik the peasants could not stand this treatment. When at the meeting of the *Mir*, Protopopov gave the peasant Starchenko, who disagreed with his opinions, a blow on the head with his stick, the crowd became excited. "Why do you strike the man?" they shouted. "You should explain and not use your stick." "He is beating us," others shouted, "let us pay him back!"

Upon this the crowd rushed on Protopopov and hustled him so severely, that the elder Dolgopolov and the rural constable Pribytkov had great difficulty in rescuing him. Protopopov shut himself up in the communal house while the crowd shouted and abused him outside.

This outburst of popular indignation was

declared to be a riot. Troops were sent to Doljik, a number of peasants were flogged or otherwise punished by administrative order, whilst others, declared to be ringleaders, were taken to prison and tried for rebellion before the Kharkov Tribunal. Fourteen of them were found guilty and sentenced to severe punishments, including penal servitude in Siberian mines, long terms of imprisonment, and hard labour in fortresses.

The District Commanders, as a body, enjoy the particular protection of the administration and of the censorship which does not allow any unfavourable reports of their doings to appear in the press.

Only in exceptional cases, as the present one, when the tribunals had to interfere, the whole truth comes to light. After the heavy charges which the trial of the delinquent peasants brought against Protopopov it would have been a public scandal not to prosecute him. The Minister of the Interior ordered him to be put on his trial, which, after much procrastination, took place in November, 1892.

A number of cases of gross abuse of power were proved apainst Protopopov. A peasant, Vorvul, had been beaten by him because he had

not recognized him, and did not take off his hat quickly enough. Another peasant, Michael Sery, was beaten by him so cruelly that his own hand was swollen and he could not take off his glove. The peasants assembled in communal meeting at Folochev were told by him that he would "smash their ugly mugs" if they made an uproar, and he added that those who should complain or petition against him should have "their complaints printed on their mugs, and their petitions on their backsides." A number of other offences of similar nature were laid to the charge of Protopopov, who was found guilty, but was sentenced only to *expulsion from the service.*

The mildness of the punishment is a conclusive proof that in Protopopov's offence there was nothing very extraordinary. The use of the fist is an integral element of the patriarchal principle. Protopopov had merely exaggerated and pushed to extremes the element of "personal" authority which all the District Commanders take for their guidance. It is very significant that his counsel advanced as an extenuating circumstance, the influence of the reactionary press, which, in advocating and defending the institution of District Commanders

on the ground of its being a strong, prompt, vigorous, patriarchal authority, had turned the head of Protopopov, who wanted to put these admonitions into practice.

One could fill many pages with examples showing that Protopopov was not quite the black sheep of the flock. "A number of District Commanders acted in the same way as Protopopov, though they do not go so far, and they remain unpunished, or practically so," says the moderate and perfectly reliable *Vestnik Evropy*.

In Kursk a peasant had quarrelled with the coachman of a District Commander. Although the affair took place within the boundaries of the city, and therefore clearly fell under the jurisdiction of the local judge, the District Commander ordered the peasant to be brought before the village tribunal. Here the peasant was found guilty of disorderly conduct and sentenced to corporal punishment, which was executed on the spot, notwithstanding the protest of the Elder of the village.

The council of the province on receiving the complaint was satisfied with reprimanding the District Commander, although he had been guilty of flagrant breach of law and abuse of power.

An interesting illustration of the views of

the District Commanders upon the character of their authority is furnished by the following story. The Zemstvo of Yukhnov (in the province of Smolensk) had founded in 1891 an Agricultural Council for the improvement of the economical condition of the whole district. With this object the council acquired a store of seeds, chemical manure and improved agricultural implements, and offered to intervene for the purchase of improved breeds of cattle. The enterprise met with great success from the very beginning. In the first year various peasants' communes bought all the stock of agricultural implements and seeds and phosphates which were offered by the council, and orders for new purchases were received from all sides, greatly in excess of the council's stock. But suddenly an unexpected obstacle appeared. Whilst the Agricultural Council was discussing the letter of the commune Sidorova ordering 400 pounds of improved seeds and the same quantity of phosphate flour, the following declaration was received from the local District Commander Titov: "Not recognizing the usefulness of the peasants' intention to have improved seeds and phosphates and other similar fancies, I, as a District Commander, will prohibit the peasants under my authority from making such

unprofitable outlay."—*Vestnik Evropy*, Dec., 1892.

The district commander Sukhotin (Chern, prov. of Tula) advised the neighbouring landlords that he can lend them at any time as bond slaves "his defaulting taxpayers," whom he undertakes to keep in "strict order."—*Vest. Evropy*, 1895, *N.* 3.

The establishment of District Commanders is one of the sorest grievances of rural Russia. The emancipation of the serfs was not a great success. Even the partisans of the Government admit that now. It did not improve the material condition of the masses. But the former serfs became citizens; they recovered their personal independence and immunity from interference in their private affairs. This was a very great moral benefit. Now, without any offence or provocation on their part, out of absurd doctrinairism this benefit has been gradually reduced to a shadow.

At the same time it must be noted that this obnoxious measure, condemned in its infancy alike by public opinion and the assembly of the highest officials of the State (the State Council), has been a total failure from the point of view of the aristocratic doctrine which inspired its creation.

Count Dmitry Tolstoi and Katkov and the gang of the *Moscow Gazette* favoured it as a means of re-establishing the patriarchal principle of local authority, which was destroyed by the emancipation. The original idea of the law was that District Commanders should be elected from among the resident nobility. But this plan had to be given up at the very outset. "A respectable gentleman would not accept the post of a District Commander," the *Moscow Gazette* quotes the words of some peasants —protesting against it as a matter of course.

There are respectable people among the District Commanders. But the better men among the nobility shun as a body this office as much as those in the police. The governors were not able to appoint to the posts of District Commanders many of the resident nobility, because the latter rarely would accept it. So the ministry allowed them to nominate members of the nobility of the province, who with our great distances were perfect strangers to the peasants whom they had to command. But even these failed to answer to the appeal. Out of the 600 vacancies for District Commanders, about one-third could not be filled by the governors

in any way, and had to be appointed out of the rabble of officialdom coming from the four winds of heaven. And it cannot be said that the authorities were very exacting in the choice of these new masters of our rural population; 40 per cent. of the District Commanders are men who have got their education at primary schools only.

Yet, as usual, the Government pretended to believe in the success of the "reform," and a few months after the institution of District Commanders the next and last step was made for the aristocratization of the country.

On June 12th, 1890, a new law changing the constitution of our Zemstvos, or provincial councils, was promulgated.

Until then, as the reader may know, thirty-eight out of the seventy-four Russian provinces had provincial councils for the management of a few local matters, as roads, hospitals, supply of funds for primary schools. These councils, called Zemstvos, were composed of members elected by three different bodies: the land-owners (without distinction of origin), the class holding town property, and the peasantry. Now the peasants alone continue to vote as a class as they did before; but it matters little how they

vote, for they are practically deprived of any share in the provincial autonomy.

According to the new regulation, they will merely elect two or three candidates for every vacancy, out of whom the governor, advised by the assembly of District Commanders, will choose the man who suits them best. These same District Commanders are empowered to convene and preside over the meeting that elects these candidates. This puts the elections entirely into their hands. There is no secret ballot, nor ballot of any kind, at peasants' meetings. The votes are given openly, *viva voce*, mostly in a lump, and they will certainly be given to those whom the District Commander recommends. A special clause prohibits the election of the District Commanders in their own districts. But the law puts no obstacle to their electing each other in a neighbourly way.

Thus the peasants, these supposed Benjamins of autocracy, are excluded from everywhere. Their noble chiefs, the District Commanders, rule at their Mir, judge at their tribunal, and sit for them at the provincial assemblies. The peasants have to pay and obey, leaving all the rest to their betters.

The old regulation (of 1864) gave the nobility an influence in provincial self-government which was quite out of proportion to its numbers. The nobility nominated about one-half of the members of all the thirty-eight Zemstvos.

The "reform" of Count Dmitry Tolstoi goes beyond that. The marshals of the provincial nobility, numbering ten or fifteen in each province, are added to the representatives of the nobility, thus giving the nobility absolute majority. The Government nominates besides one-fifth of the members in addition to those elected by the different classes of citizens, and two special officials of the administration sit at the provincial Zemstvos to further strengthen the hand of the Government.

Thus the Government did all in its power to transform the Zemstvos into so many bureaucratic commissions obedient to a sign from the minister. The nobility was the only force that counted in the new Zemstvos, and it was expected that the exclusive and unwarrantable privileges granted to this class by the new law would act as a bribe to lure it over to the side of the Government. As to the millions of peasants forming the nine-tenths of the population, paying three-fourths of the

budget and furnishing nine-tenths of the army, they are nowhere on the new provincial councils. The position of the peasant deputies in the new Zemstvos is more than subservient—it is degrading, since their immediate chiefs, the District Commanders, having almost discretionary powers over them, are also there.

The Liberal Zemstvos and the Liberal press have often protested against the admission of District Commanders to provincial councils.

"The presence of District Commanders in the provincial councils," says the *Saratov Gazette*, "has one serious inconvenience. The deputies of the peasants, as people who are their immediate subordinates, are afraid to express their opinions freely. With the suspiciousness characteristic of our peasants, their deputies think that any disagreement with the opinions of their District Commander may be unpleasant to the latter. That is why no one who has been at the district councils, where sometimes a considerable proportion of the deputies are peasants, can fail to notice the passive submissiveness of the peasants to the opinions of the District Commander of their locality. Such a state of things is hardly

desirable in the general interests of provincial self-government."

The reader will not be deceived by the cautious, subdued tone of the paper, which is published under the censorship. The "serious inconvenience" means a monstrosity. Imagine a council of any kind in which one member can have other members flogged. The "inconvenience" of such a mutual relation would render the very right of sending deputies a cruel mockery.

The peasants have been virtually excluded under the Tzar Mujik from participation in local self-government, even as they have been deprived of many other civil rights.

So much for their political rights. Now let us say a few words upon the economic conditions of the masses under Alexander III.

VII.

THE GREAT FAMINE AND THE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE RUSSIAN PEASANTS.

IN 1891 the attention of the whole world was attracted to the condition of the Russian peasantry, owing to the breaking out of a vast mediæval famine in the whole of the Volga region. The harvest having failed, thirty-four millions of people, according to other calculations, thirty-seven or thirty-nine, were left without any means of subsistence, to face hunger and cold during the eight winter months. The situation was very grave. In the autumn, six weeks after the gathering of the scanty harvest in the provinces of Kazan, Samara and others, people were feeding on acorns, grass and bark bread. And in a few months over thirty millions of people were reduced to the same extremity. Taking the low estimate of 1*l.* as necessary to keep a man over the winter months, the total sum required

to prevent wholesale starvation was about 400 millions of roubles. Such a sum could not possibly be forthcoming, and a vast and acute famine was anticipated, with all its terrible consequences. And the Government, by its silly efforts to hush up the whole thing, seemed bent upon bringing people to the verge of despair.

As early as July, 1890, when the results of the harvest became known, the Zemstvos of Saratov, Samara, Nijni Novgorod, and Kazan sent to the Minister of the Interior detailed reports upon the situation, asking for large advances of money to save the population from the worst consequences of the distress. In reply, the Government sent to the Volga Provinces a special commissioner, whose mission was to hush up the matter, and to protect the Government from the demand of the Zemstvos. Of course, General Vishniakov fulfilled his easy task to perfect satisfaction, reporting that there was no famine in the Volga Provinces, and consequently no need of subsidies. This is the system usually adopted for hushing up unpleasant affairs, and it was in a fair way of being hushed up; the official gazette published a reassuring report of the conditions of the province supposed to be in a state of distress. The *Moscow Gazette* declared the "famine" to

be a "Liberal intrigue," a fiction set afloat to discredit the Government. The editors of the papers received stringent orders not to publish, under the fear of suppression, and other administrative penalties, any news about the famine likely to "disturb the public mind."

A calamity of such an extent as the famine of 1891 could not be hushed up any more than a conflagration. It was bound to assert itself, if the Government persisted long enough in the silly efforts to prevent its being brought to public notice through the ordinary medium of the press. But it was quite in the power of the Government to allow the distress to come to so advanced a stage that no efforts could prevent very terrible consequences. We owe it to Count Lev Tolstoi that the measures against the calamity, although taken late, were not put off until the case was past cure. He is the only man in Russia whose voice could not be silenced and against whom the Government dared not lift its hand, and it was he who compelled the Government to give up the policy of the ostrich.

He published in a Russian paper an article entitled "The Terrible Question," in which he pictured the danger of the situation; the scarcity of corn, and the absence of any

reserve fund in the impoverished population, which had been living from hand to mouth, and could have no alternative but to starve or steal if bread were not forthcoming. He called upon the Government not to keep the country in suspense, and to state plainly whether there was enough corn in the country to keep the Russian people until the next harvest or not, and if there were not, to take immediate steps for getting a sufficient quantity of corn from abroad.

The conspiracy for enforcing silence was broken. Since one man spoke so loudly, it was useless to shut the mouths of others. The whole press quoted and endorsed Count Tolstoi's letter, and Vyshnegradsky found it necessary to give it a reply, stating that the quantity of corn possessed by the country was amply sufficient to keep the population until the following harvest.

This was reassuring to some extent. The export of grain had been stopped by an imperial ukase of September, 1890.

The corn possessed by the country could not disappear, and it was consoling to think that it was within reach. But this fact did not in the least solve the question whether the millions of

Russian peasants would starve or not. The vast quantity of corn mentioned by Vyshnegradsky was *not* in the hands of those who needed it most, and to transfer it from the hands of corn-dealers into those of the famishing peasants, an equivalent of full 400 millions of roubles were needed. Without this sum the needy peasants could get no more profit from the corn stored up in the country than if it had been exported abroad, or were hoarded on the moon, unless they took it by force. But this was an expedient strongly objected to by the well-to-do classes.

The peasants themselves, with their traditional endurance and submissiveness, showed a decided aversion for this course of action, not in all cases, perhaps, insuperable. Those most concerned, at least, did not expect it to be so.

A. Potapenko, the well-known Russian author, in his sketches of the famine-stricken districts, tells a suggestive story. There was among the members of the Zemstvo he visited, an old man, known formerly as one of the most cruel serf-owners, who enjoyed torturing his peasants, and actually killed several of them. This was a criminal offence, and he was exiled for several years to Siberia. On returning, after

the emancipation, he showed himself the bitterest enemy of the people, and at the first sitting of the Zemstvo, convened on purpose to discuss the measures for relieving the distress, he made a fiery speech against giving any relief to "these drunkards, robbers, and scoundrels," as he designated the peasants.

"At the sitting at which I was present," says Potapenko, "as his huge, ungainly figure rose upon the platform, people expected to hear a similar outburst of inveterate hatred; but, to the general surprise, he began to speak in favour of prompt and generous relief."

"What does it mean?" asked Potapenko of a friend of his, whose estate was near that of the speaker's.

"It means this," the friend said, "a month ago the peasants came to ask him for a loan of corn. Of course he refused, and bad words passed between him and the applicants. And the famine in these parts is very severe. There are houses where there is literally nothing and no prospect of anything. Now, about a week after the squabble, his granary took fire and was saved almost by a miracle. Of course, he must have understood what that meant. Then, again, he sent his manager one day with a load

of corn to the railway station, but on the way the cart was waylaid, all the corn was stolen, and the police could discover no trace either of the stolen goods or of the delinquents. These were indications of a kind not likely to conduce to equanimity. He took fright; there might be worse in store. He understood that it was better to protect himself with the help of public money."

Korolenko's book, "The Year of Famine," contains a significant portrait of a well-to-do peasant, a local kulak or usurer, whose feelings towards his destitute fellow-villagers are the very reverse of friendly.

On the absurd system of collective responsibility, the loan of corn advanced for the support of the destitute was to be repaid by the village commune in a body. If the poor have nothing to repay it with, the rich have to pay it for them.

Korolenko's hero, Potap Ivanovich, wanted therefore to repudiate all assistance (отбиться отъ пособія). But he changed his mind, owing, as he confessed, to "miracles," which occur now and then in the village. "A barn not visited by anyone would take fire by itself in the dead of the night, or a hay-stack."

"Bad times," he explained; "people look so fierce. A man who has never been a thief will try his luck in that line, and worse may happen."

The bread riots which took place in Vitebsk, Pskov, Astrakhan and Saratov proved later on that these apprehensions were not without foundation.

In higher spheres the disquieting reports of the governors of the famine-stricken provinces, and the eloquent figures of criminal statistics, shook up the apathy of the central Government, and induced it to take steps to prevent the worst consequences of popular despair and misery.

Thirty-four millions of people absolutely destitute, with death staring them in the face, and nothing to lose, were a danger which no government could overlook.

The sum of twelve millions, which was mentioned as the maximum which the State could advance from the Imperial Relief Fund, was gradually increased tenfold. But this was only about one-third of the sum required for the relief of the famishing provinces. In other terms, the State undertook to feed one hungry man out of three. Where was food to be

found for the remaining two? Public beneficence was the only resource that could be looked to. This was self-evident as soon as the papers were allowed to open subscriptions for the relief fund. But the secret wish and hope of the Government was that the money should be entrusted to its own agents and officials, under the control and direction of a special committee, composed of Cabinet Ministers, high dignitaries of the State, and presided over by the Tzarevitch himself—now the Tzar Nicholas II.

It was expected that such a committee would inspire confidence as to the proper management of the funds entrusted to it. So it would in other countries. But in Russia, the deep-rooted distrust in official honesty is quite proof against the fascination of big names. I have it on very good authority that when the representatives of the English Society of Friends came to Russia with the money subscribed in England, *ladies of the Court* privately advised them not to entrust that money to the Tzarevitch's committee. Only three millions were subscribed to its funds all over Russia during the nine months of its existence.

The Red Cross Society, by way of conces-

sion, was allowed to distribute its funds through special agents. The Society enjoys a good reputation, acquired during the Turkish campaign; but its staff was insufficient for the work of relieving the distress over one-third of the Empire, so that it had to depend upon the work either of local officials or men who were not known and could not be controlled. The Red Cross got less than four millions; yet, as it was soon proved by facts, thousands of wealthy people were ready to come to the assistance of their suffering countrymen—they only wanted the certainty that their money would reach its destination, and they had no confidence in organizations connected in any way with officialdom. The guarantee that would satisfy them, and for which they asked, was the right of managing the relief funds independently, without the interference of the Government. Nothing seems more reasonable or harmless. But for twenty-five years the policy of the Government had been, by fair means or foul, to keep the masses of the Russian peasantry apart from the democratic elements of society. To allow, under pretext of relief, free access to the people, to men and women whose loyalty was more than doubtful, seemed particularly dangerous at such

a critical time. Now as Russian society showed clearly that it would not move in the matter unless its hands were free, the dilemma which stood before the Government was either to come to terms with society or to have no assistance on their part worth speaking of. As one may well have expected, judging by antecedents, the Government preferred to let the people starve, rather than run the risk of having a few of them "infected with ideas of liberty."

Whenever put to the test, the Tzars, tribunes of the people, never hesitated in the choice between the interests of the people and those of their own sacred person. The Minister of Finance, Vyshnegradsky, expressed this policy in all its frank cynicism at the interview which he gave to the deputation from the Moscow Relief Society, backed by millions of roubles. The Minister not merely refused peremptorily to allow the society to distribute relief independently, but had the impudence to threaten to have any persons arrested who should be found engaged in this work in the country.

To arrest men as criminals for going with open hands and hearts to the assistance of their famine-stricken brethren was the extreme point to which crazy red-tapeism could go, but it could

not be maintained at that point for long. It was impossible to outrage the public conscience to such a degree with impunity. At a moment when the whole of the educated class was burning with pity for the ill-fated peasants, it was not only cruel but dangerous to repulse the hands that brought bread to the starving peasants, their children, and old people. The Government had declared that it was unable to feed all. After such an avowal, to stand in the way of those who offered to do it was a monstrous crime, provoking both the peasants and their friends of the upper classes to revolt.

The latter did, in fact, rebel at once by disregarding all obstacles and starting the work of relief at their own risk and responsibility all over the famine-stricken region. One may say that our educated classes put all their unemployed forces at the service of the peasantry during the terrible winter of 1890-91. Ladies who had spent their lives at Court balls and parties, and the "Radical" young students of both sexes; authors of world-wide fame and obscure village priests; aristocrats, merchants, burghers—all rushed to the villages, regardless of discomfort, privation, and exposure, to distribute the relief funds, which in most cases were

entrusted to them by a number of friends. They defied the prohibitions of the administration, and the Government was bound to give way. For three months the red-tapeism asserted itself by trammelling in all possible ways the activity of these generous men and women. But on December 12th, 1890, a circular was issued at last, enjoining upon the administration "not to put any obstacles in the way of private initiative in the work of relief"—a preposterous order, which appears superfluous to the point of absurdity to an Englishman, and stands as a condemnation of the whole system which made it necessary.

Three months had brought about the transition from the speech of Vyshnegradsky to the decree of December 12th. Besides the moral impossibility of fighting the whole of Russian society upon such delicate ground, there was a special reason why the Government thought it advisable to reconsider its decision. Advanced and democratic Russia, which was the most eager and irrepressible in its desire to get at the people, did not make any attempt to take advantage of the famine for fomenting disorders and riots. The fears of the Government upon the point proved to be quite

groundless. In the face of the horrors of the famine, it was impossible for men with genuine pity and love for the people not to devote themselves entirely to the relief of immediate suffering. Educated Russia devoted to the peasants the assistance which was demanded by them, and in the form in which it was demanded. The gloomy year did not create a new step in the revolutionary movement, but it established a moral bond between the intellectual classes and the masses of the people, who for the first time saw their elder brothers in the capacity of true and devoted friends.

On the other hand, the year passed in the midst of the people left incalculable traces upon the minds and hearts of the leading sections of the upper classes. The great famine marks an epoch in the growth of the opposition. Two things became clear as day to Russians and foreigners alike whose attention was fixed by the famine upon our agrarian conditions. The first was that the calamity was due only in small degree to the accident of inclement weather, its real cause being the total ruin and disablement of the peasantry; and, secondly, that no effective remedy was possible as long as the present political system prevails.

To begin with, it was proved that the famine which brought so much suffering upon the whole of Russia was due to the falling-off of the harvest, amounting to *one-fifth* only of the normal one. Quite a similar falling-off occurred in France in 1888, as proved by the official statistics, and the failure was not even noticed by the world at large, for it did not disturb even the surface of the national life. With us it has upset everything. If such a failure, which is within the daily chances of every agricultural country, throws thirty-four millions of people upon public charity, it is a proof of the total ruin of the whole agricultural class, which lives on the verge of starvation, and has nothing whatever to fall back upon. This is a fact which has been admitted and recognized in 1891 in Russia by the press, by men of science, and even by the Government. The official report, published in No. 188 of the *Volga Messenger*, says that it has been ascertained that the crisis through which the Volga regions is passing began virtually two years ago, as it was from that time that a considerable diminution was noticed in all the revenues from direct taxes upon the rural population. This decrease was the greatest in the provinces

which later on were most severely affected by the failure of crops, and which require the most energetic measures for the relief of the distressed population. Thus, in the province of Samara, in 1889, there was a deficit of one million roubles in the direct taxes paid by the peasants. In 1890 the deficit increased to two millions. In the province of Kazan, in 1889 (owing to exceptional energy on the part of the administration), the peasants paid an extra 85,000 roubles to cover the enormous arrears of former years. By next year there was a deficit of over two millions. In the province of Nijni Novgorod there was, in 1889, a deficit of 340,000 roubles, and in 1890 a deficit of 869,000. In the province of Simbirsk the respective deficit of the two years was 253,000 and 653,000. In the province of Saratov the deficit was of 22,000 and 377,000 roubles respectively, and so on.

The increase in the arrears of 1890, as compared with that of 1889, fully corresponds with the gradual falling-off of the crops. In the province of Samara the return of crops in 1889 was 48½ million puds; in 1890 it fell to 42; in Kazan, from 37 millions it fell to 27; in that of Simbirsk from 38 to 29; in that of Nijni Novgorod from 21 to 15 millions, and so on.

As a matter of fact, the crisis began, not two years ago, but at least eleven, because the year 1880 marks the epoch in which the results of the exhaustion of both land and people began to show quite clearly.

The Imperial Commission of 1871 established by its extensive investigations the astounding fact that the Russian peasants pay to the State in taxes about 45 per cent. of their total income derived from all sources, agricultural and manufacturing. Though nominally imposed upon property, this is no longer a property tax. It is a tax upon *labour*, differing from serfdom only in form. Out of his six days' work the peasant was bound to give to the State about three days. This was more than any taxpayer could stand. With the insecurity of industrial work and the fluctuations of the harvest, the peasants could not possibly make both ends meet. They contracted debts which absorbed more than the greater effectiveness of free labour could give. According to the lowest estimates, the modern peasant has to work now for the State and the money-lenders no less than four days a week (Slonimsky). Thus the amount of gratuitous labour has increased from 45 to 66 per cent., and only 33 per cent. of his nominal time

is left to the peasant for his own maintenance. The peasants were defeated in the hard struggle for existence. There are many and frightful proofs of their gradual impoverishment. Such are the diminution in the consumption of bread, the terrible mortality in the rural districts, which in thirteen provinces is higher than that of the towns, and in 1880 reached 62 per thousand.

The provinces which are now numbered as those where the distress is most severe, occupy a rather conspicuous place in the table of mortality. The highest is observable in that of Orel, where the average mortality reaches the frightful figure of 46.7 per thousand, which is far more than double the average mortality of London. The province of Nijni Novgorod follows, showing a mortality of 46.5 ; Samara, 44.6 ; Perm, Simbirsk, Orenburg, Viatka, showing a death-rate between 43 and 46 – all exceeding the average mortality for the Empire by 6 or 9 per thousand. Holy Russia, with her excellent climate and soil, has the highest death-rate in Europe, 37.3.

In Russia, the whole burden of the State weighs upon the agricultural population, the peasants. Those of them who depend exclusively upon agriculture were the first to be

ruined, although their land was the best in the country, and, indeed, in Europe. Now with us there is one unmistakable test of the degree of destitution of every district or village; it is the amount of arrears in taxes, for they are collected rod in hand with relentless severity. We need not be surprised to find that the provinces heading the list are precisely those which have become the centres of the famine; Samara, with arrears of 11¼ million, Kazan 7$\frac{9}{10}$ million, Nijni Novgorod, Saratov, having each about 2½ million. Simbirsk, Voronej, Tambov, all have millions of arrears, which represent hundreds of thousands of blows of the rod given to the destitute in the vain hope of extorting the payment of their debt.

A destitute peasantry means poor husbandry, and with bad husbandry there is no getting good returns. The average productiveness of Russian agriculture is very low; seed excluded, it is 2.9 upon one grain sown, which is about the limit beyond which agriculture is impossible. Now our agriculture has sunk below this limit. The "bad harvests" which are below that average are becoming distressingly frequent within the last decade. Very often they lead to actual famines. The Volga basin has been

most often visited by this scourge. The much-tried middle Volga region, with the province of Samara for its centre, passed in 1873 through a terrible famine, from which it never could completely recover. Then, after seven years of fluctuating harvests, it was stricken with another famine—that of 1880—which brought it a few degrees lower still. In the eleven years that followed there were seven bad harvests to four good ones, and of the seven bad years there were two actual famines.

The story of other agricultural regions is pretty much the same. Thus the famine of 1891 was but the last link in a long series. Russian agriculture and agriculturists began to slide downhill long ago. The general famine of 1880 gave them a blow which accelerated the sliding process. The famine of 1891 was the *coup de grâce* which hurled them down into the abyss.

The most serious and lasting effect of the famine was the destruction of cattle, the chief and only riches of our agricultural population. When the cattle are gone, a peasant has to give up his plot of land, and is turned a proletarian, "a batrak," whose position is hardly better than that of an ancient serf. Now mil-

lions of horses perished in 1890-1 from want of fodder, or were sold in haste by their owners for ridiculously small sums. In the provinces of Kazan, Tamboff, Samara, the markets were flooded with horses at six or eight shillings a head. N. Sharapov writes: "Simultaneously, all over the distressed provinces, the conviction spread like wildfire that further struggle was impossible. The selling of horses and cattle became a sort of epidemic." It is calculated that in most of the famine-stricken provinces there is only left one horse for every ten families.

The next year there was a falling-off of the crops in the south-western and southern regions —in the provinces of Kamenetz-Podolsk, Kherson, the southern districts of the province of Poltava, as well as in a number of provinces which have suffered from the famine of the former year —Tula, Orel, Kazan, where, according to testimonies of Count Boriatinsky and Lev Tolstoi, the distress, though less extensive, was much more severe than before. But much less has been allowed to come out as regards the new calamity, which certainly did not contribute to lessen its effect. With the very low standard of our agriculture, yielding the absolute minimum (three

grains per one sown) below which agriculture becomes impossible, and with the complete destitution of the peasantry, partial famines must recur every year. The Empire is so huge that the climatic conditions cannot possibly be uniformly favourable through all its vast area. And when they are not favourable famine follows fatally and unavoidably. The Russians themselves will not call it by such an ominous name. They are used to seeing people eating for bread horrible stuff resembling dry manure, composed chiefly of husk or bark or pounded straw. In most of the provinces the peasants have recourse to such famine food regularly every year for a few spring months, when the old bread runs scanty and the new one is not yet gathered. A peasant who is able to eat pure bread all the year round is considered, and considers himself, a wealthy man. At the slightest falling-off in the harvest, the "wealthy" pass into the ranks of the poor, and the poor ones fall into a state of utter destitution and wholesale ruin. What the year 1890-91 has shown us on a gigantic scale is repeated every year on a smaller scale. Every year scores of thousands of peasants—sometimes hundreds of thousands—have their homes

ruined, their families broken, each member having to go a different way for a chance of getting a precarious livelihood—the father to some wealthy neighbour as farm labourer, the wife and daughters to town to seek work in factories, and worse, the young boys being sold as "apprentices" to some artisan or publican.

No peasant is safe against such a fate; and with taxes amounting to one-half of his net income, it does not require a failure of crops to ruin a peasant. Quite independently of the fluctuations of the harvest and the pressure of general economic conditions, an ever-increasing section of Russian peasantry is disabled and thrown into the ranks of landless agricultural proletarians, which for them is the ruin of everything and the utmost degradation.

Alexander III., with all his professed love for the peasants, did nothing to improve their position, and a good deal to make it worse.

His Peasant Land Bank, which was to save the rural population from the hands of the usurers, proved a fraud, for it only increased the power of the usurers.

His intended reform of the taxes was a mockery; the abolition of capitation money

and of the tax on salt was replaced by new taxes upon the very same peasantry. Sometimes it was made simultaneously, so as to make the irony of it even more evident. This was the case with the abolition of the tax upon salt, which was immediately followed by the increase to eight millions of the redemption money paid by the State peasants. The high protective tariff enriched the middle class at the expense of the peasants, who had to pay double for manufactured articles of first necessity—cottons, candles, soap—and treble for agricultural machines and simple tools, like scythes. The reckless expenditure of money for the support of the nobility was also an additional burden laid on the peasants. Other despots have been clever enough to compensate the people for the loss of freedom by material comfort; Alexander III. enslaved his beloved peasants to the nobility, and made them pay the cost.

What, then, remains of the motto of Alexander III., "Russia for the Russians"? That the educated classes are excluded wholesale from the privilege of being considered "Russians" goes without saying. The Russia of Alexander III. had no room for them—that is

well known to everybody. But on a somewhat closer examination, it becomes clear that the millions of peasants were not Russians either; they certainly were treated as if they were not. Who, then, according to Alexander III., were "Russians" for whom their country was not a harsh stepmother? They are represented by a handful of people, whom the Tzar took under his protection. The grandiloquent motto of Alexander III. ought to be amended; it was not Russia for the Russians, but Russia for a gang of self-seekers trying to fish in troubled waters, impecunious nobles, the rabble of officialdom—or, to sum it up in one word, Russia for the Tzar.

Only in one way Alexander III. was never slow in showing his active love for the Russian people, namely, in persecuting relentlessly all those of his subjects who differed from the bulk of the population either in race or religion. His was a reign of persecution all round.

VIII.

THE JEWISH QUESTION IN RUSSIA.

IT has been said by many people not Nihilists at all, that the name of the Persecutor would suit Alexander III. much better than that of the Peacemaker. Because the maintenance of peace was more of a happy accident of which any man in his senses would have taken advantage, whilst the persecution was a spontaneous activity, which is most characteristic of Alexander III., both as a man and as a Tzar.

Who was not persecuted during his reign? The Poles, the Fins, the Germans, had all their doleful tale to relate; the Raskolniks, although they were promised freedom for their decorative service during the coronation, and the Stundists, although they were the most obedient and peaceable of his subjects. But the crusade against the Jews is certainly the widest, most far-reaching, and most important

of the exploits of this kind, which give its gloomy colour to the reign. At the same time, to foreigners, it is the least comprehensible.

Making allowance for the short-sightedness and tyrannical habits of our Government, we can account for the persecution of the Stundists. A body of Nonconformists, not recognizing the supremacy of the Tzar in spiritual matters, may, and we hope will, come some day to question the legitimacy of his secular power. Spreading like wildfire, they are a real danger to the present Russian Government, which, not being much versed in history, may well entertain the wild hope of putting them down by brute force.

One can easily account for barbarity, however shocking, in dealing with political prisoners and exiles. Despotic governments, when frightened, can go to any length of cruelty. But here we have a whole race, millions of souls, who, after all, have never offended the Government, who do not question its authority, who have obeyed the laws and paid taxes, bribes, and all their dues. Why, then, are they so persecuted? Are they really so bad as the Russian Government represents them? Is the motive religious fanaticism, or blind racial hatred? Is the

Government really responsible for these persecutions, or has it been forced to them by the anti-Jewish feeling of the nation? All these questions are interesting enough to be treated on their own merits in a thoroughly objective and scientific spirit, which an opponent of the Russian Government can adopt easily enough. When the actual offences are so numerous and aggravating, one is not tempted to invent offences.

The Russian Government is certainly not responsible—the present Government at least—for the existence in the south and south-west of Russia of very abnormal relations between the Jews and the Russian population, which create in those parts the so-called Jewish question. This question bears relation to the whole of our history, and is one of the burning national, even international, problems with which every country has, or has had to deal. In Russia it is only more difficult and complicated because of the greater mass of Jewish population, and the general backwardness of the country.

There are 4,000,000 of Jews in Russia proper, not counting 1,000,000 of Polish Jews. Of this number, three-quarters of a million are scattered all over the empire, but the remaining three and

a quarter millions are huddled together in the south-western corner of European Russia, in a vast *ghetto* called the Pale of Settlement. They form there a race within a race, living apart from the rest, and there is a marked hostility toward them on the part of the masses of Russian people. This hostility has undoubtedly a religious basis, or at least originated in religion. But it seems to me an error to represent, as most people do, the anti-Jewish movement in Russia as a manifestation of religious intolerance. Among the uneducated masses religious hostility toward the Jews undoubtedly exists in a latent state, and is stirred up purposely by those whose interest it is to work upon it. But the classes which are at the head of the Russian anti-Jewish movement have long ago outlived the period of religious fanaticism. With them the hostility toward the Jews is purely racial. With the masses the racial antipathy is also a much stronger ingredient in the anti-Jewish feeling than religion. Thus we may fairly describe the anti-Jewish movement as racial.

I hardly need say that the Jews, as a race, are not a bit worse than other people. Whenever I hear the idle, wholesale characterization of Jews as a race of usurers, tricksters, and the

like, I always remember Mr. David Phillipson of Cincinnati, author of "The Jews in English Fiction," who observed that the process by which the Gentiles form their notions of Jews is invariably thus: The vices, crimes, and shortcomings of individual Jews, no matter how restricted as to number, are fastened upon the whole race, while the manifestations of all opposite qualities, no matter how striking or frequent, are viewed as individual exceptions, and therefore are not taken into account. I beg to add that it seems to me that the same process is adopted by all races in their mutual estimates. There is no love lost between different races and tribes anywhere, each considering itself the only good and lovable one. In countries where various nationalities are mingled, and have many opportunities of hurting each other by their racial differences, their antagonism becomes so intense and so out of all proportion to the real differences between them, as to become positively amazing to an outsider. Among the Balkan Slavs or the motley population of south-eastern Austria one may study this queer manifestation of narrow-mindedness.

The Russian Jews have lived for centuries a

life of complete isolation from the bulk of the population, remaining a nation within a nation. It is only within the last thirty or forty years that they began to read Russian books, go to Russian schools, and take interest in art, the sciences, and politics. Nevertheless, they have already produced a number of men whose names are the pride of Russia. In music, in which this gifted race stands so high, we have quite a number of eminent artists, of whom I will mention those who are better known abroad. The two brothers Rubenstein, Anton and Nicholas; Vladimir de Pachman, and that wonderful boy pianist, the rising star of Russian music, and the heir elect of all its glory, the young Mark Hamburg, who produced such a sensation in London four years ago, and is sure to produce it once again before long. Antokolsky, the greatest sculptor of the age, the man about whom Turghenev used to say that if he ever met a genius, he was one, is also a born Jew. The Jewish race has produced no Russian Heine or Börne; but the present literary generation, which is the first, or at the utmost the second generation of the Russian Jews that has been educated at all, has already given to Russia a number of eminent literary men, some of

them prominent in their profession, like Semen A. Vengueroff; some standing foremost among their contemporaries, like Minsky, the best among our living poets.

Another, to me, far more striking fact, which speaks volumes for the high moral qualities of the Jewish race, is the participation of the Russian Jews in the struggle for Russian freedom. For more than fifteen years in the gloomy empire of the Tzar a fierce struggle has been raging, in which only the ardent enthusiasm and absolute self-denial of the few enable them to cope with the enormous forces arrayed against them. There are thousands of educated Jews who have cast in their lot with our patriotic movement. This fact has greatly hurt the feelings of our Anti-Semitic ruler, and an edict was issued in 1885 making, contrary to all principles of justice, political offenders of the Jewish race punishable with far greater severity than Christians. But I never heard that this edict had produced any impression upon the Jews, and there are as many of them as before willing to give up their all for the freedom and better future of the country which is a stepmother to them. This is a fact that does not

agree with the general conception of the Jewish character. Yet it was the outcome of the short experience of 1860-80, during which a generation of Jews passing through our schools grew up in friendly surroundings, mixing freely with Russians, feeling themselves men and citizens, and not a race of outcasts. Some of the best and most influential members of our party were born Jews. And when I remember their kindliness of heart, their pure ideality, coupled so often with a mind so subtle, flexible, and comprehensive, I cannot help thinking that Spinoza was not altogether a miraculous apparition, but a representative of the best type of the race. I venture also to surmise that in better circumstances the Jewish people would probably produce more Spinozas than Shylocks.

The common, uneducated Jew is neither better nor worse than men in his position and circumstances generally are. A Jewish usurer is exactly the same sort of person as a Christian usurer. A common Jewish merchant is as tricky as a common Russian merchant. A Jewish artisan is like the Russian artisan in all respects, except that his face bears strong marks

of his Semitic origin; that his nose turns down, while that of his Russian *confrère* is merrily turned up; that he is generally dark, instead of being fair; that his gesticulation is queer, and that he speaks Russian with a peculiarly unpleasant accent.

The hostility toward the Jews has its origin in the surprising tenacity of their race, which has preserved its purity through all its historical vicissitudes, and is quite the same nowadays as it was a thousand years ago.

The exceptional business capacity of the Jews, developed in the course of centuries by their exclusion from all other pursuits, has created everywhere a natural channel for the manifestation of that racial hostility. A Jewish middleman, whatever his special calling—trade, usury, banking—fulfils his functions as well as a middleman of another race. If anything, rather better. Being on the average cleverer, he can offer his services at a lower rate than his rivals. That is indeed the only reason why he beats them; but he beats them invariably, and that is the cause of his historical troubles. Everywhere the Jews almost monopolize the most lucrative calling in the community—that of middlemen.

They come to constitute a class apart as well as a race apart, and racial hostility comes to embitter the struggle between the classes. The racial struggle is substituted for the economical struggle, and the worsted and invidious rivals of the Jews, who only wait for this opportunity are accepted by the mob for its leaders.

In the Pale of Settlement the Jews, although forming but one-seventh of the population, have concentrated in their hands one-half of the wholesale trade of the region, and have almost monopolized the retail trade. Russians, Germans, Poles, Greeks, all have been beaten by them, and as a matter of course they do not feel very gratified by it. The lower middle-class, the Greeks in particular, have played a very conspicuous part in the anti-Jewish riots.

The Russian peasants are very peaceable and inoffensive creatures, too much so, indeed, for the interests of independence and good government. If left to themselves they would rarely, if ever, give vent to their latent ill feelings against the Jews in open rioting, but the middle class are there to egg them on. In the two most notorious riots, those of 1871 and 1881, in Odessa, both of which began in the vicinity of

the Greek Church, the Greek merchants incited and headed the mob. The Russian merchants are the chief allies of the Government in Jew-baiting nowadays.

Since 1881 the anti-Jewish movement in Russia has entered upon a new phase, because the Government itself takes the lead in that war against one class of its own subjects.

Anti-Semitism is not a Russian invention. It originated in Germany, where it was elaborated by a certain class of scholars and philosophers into a social theory. Its real author is undoubtedly Prince Bismarck. It was he that inaugurated a reign of brute force such as Europe has not known at any other epoch, even in the time of the first Napoleon. Force means right; the dominant race, simply because the strongest, has a right to get rid of a weaker race, if the latter happens to annoy it in some way. The wholesale eviction by Bismarck of Poles from Posen is a direct parallel of the wholesale eviction of Jews in Russia. The persecution of the Finnish nationality, started by the present Government in Russia, is just as unprovoked, foolish, and harmful to the general interests of the State as the persecution of the Jews. The

one prepares us to see the other without much surprise. It is the same deliberate appeal to the selfishness of the dominant race with a view of transforming it into a sort of dominant caste, whose interests are identified with the interests of the State, while those of others are trampled down. Such a policy is immorality erected into a system. In the long run it is sure to bring ruin and dissolution to the State. But it is the last trump of a tottering despotism.

Alexander III. deliberately put barriers to the fusion of the two races. Education, to which access was at one time given to Jews, worked in Russia remarkably well for the removal of racial prejudices on both sides. It gave the best promise for the future, because of the great zeal of the Jews for education. There was a rush to colleges and universities on the part of Jewish youths. In some southern colleges the Jews numbered fifty, sixty, sometimes seventy per cent. of the pupils. In the universities of Odessa and Kharkov they formed, on the average, fifteen to twenty per cent. of the students, and they were strongly represented in all other high schools.

Now Alexander III. has deliberately rejected

this natural means of reconciling the two races. From some schools, formerly open to them, the Jews were excluded completely. In others they were admitted as a necessary evil, but only up to a certain low percentage, three, five, and in some instances ten per cent. of the total number of Christian pupils. If Christians lag behind, the Jews have to pay the penalty. In the town of Biely a Jewish apothecary wanted to send his boy to the local college. But the director informed him that there was for a Jewish boy only four-fifths of a vacancy, which meant that the last Christian ten was not complete, being two boys short. The father petitioned the Minister of Public Education, Count Delianoff, asking that the four-fifths of the boy might carry to school the other one-fifth of the boy, instead of letting the unauthorized one-fifth keep the entire boy outside. But Count Delianoff was strict; admittance was refused, and the father was compelled to send to the college two Christian boys at his own expense to make room for his son. But few parents can afford such outlay, and there are many towns within the Pale where Jews constitute from sixty to eighty per cent. of the

population. Thus the new law means compulsory ignorance. I need not speak of the discouraging restrictions depriving the Jews who have received their degrees from practising in the professions for which they have been qualified.

The Government does not want the Jews to be Russianized. On the contrary, it wants every Jewish boy to feel keenly and never be able to forget that he is an outcast. There is a special edict prohibiting the Jewish boys from giving lessons to Christian children. In Minsk a Jewish boy of fourteen was expelled from the college because he was found guilty of teaching a peasant boy merely for love of the child. In the same town there lived in 1891 a certain Doctor Medem, a Jew by birth. He had two boys, the youngest of whom was christened, the eldest was not. Now the authorities prohibited the elder boy from preparing his younger brother for examinations, because the latter was baptized.

Nor did the late Tzar want the Jews to become Christians. In former times the conversion of a Jew to Christianity cancelled all his disabilities. But by a new edict of 1890 the

rights granted to converts have been restricted to a qualified freedom of settlement, complete citizenship being granted only to the grandchildren, the second generation of Christians. The war against the Jews is not a war of conquest, but a war of extermination.

. . . . . .

Anti-Jewish riots have always occurred at long intervals in our southern cities, with their mixed, excitable populations. But they were unimportant and rare. They were ordinary scuffles, which take place between alien tribes everywhere. The one which preceded the outbreaks of 1882-3 occurred in Odessa in 1870, and did not provoke imitation anywhere else. During the Passion Week, after the Mass, the Greek sailors and merchants attacked the Jews in the neighbourhood of the Greek Church. Being few, they got the worst of it. They appealed for help to the crowd of Russians, who joined hands with them. The riot extended. The troops were few; the police lost their heads. For two days the rioters could satisfy their lust for destruction to their hearts' content. At the news of the approach of the troops the crowd dispersed and vanished, leaving the authorities to wreak their brutal, stupid vengeance upon innocent men

seized at random and flogged in the streets. The matter ended there. The isolated Odessa riot had no echo in any other place.

But what is most remarkable about the riots of 1882-3, which open the era of Jewish persecutions, is that they seemed to be contagious to a degree which no former disturbance of the kind had ever shown. There were riots in Elisavetgrad, Kieff, Balta, Ekaterinoslav, Smiela, Biela Zerkov, Uman, Skviza, etc., etc.

The whole of Southern Russia was embraced by them. They went even beyond its limits; one of the fiercest riots occurred in Kunavino, near Nijni Novgorod.

Was this a manifestation of religious fanaticism, such as is recorded in the annals of the Middle Ages, or was there some other hidden force underlying this wild outburst? One fact seemed to point clearly to the latter explanation. Everywhere, according to the testimony of numerous and unimpeachable eye-witnesses, the rioters set to their destructive work with the conviction that they were fulfilling some secret and imperative order. At times this belief gave rise to very curious incidents. Near Skviry, a small town in the province of Kieff, there lived a Jew, Abraham Jultik. He owned a small flour-mill,

and was on the very best terms with the surrounding peasantry. He was an excellent man, without any trace of that greed for money which people consider inherent in the Jewish blood. Being rather well off, and depending upon the work of his own hands, he often lent money to needy peasants, "for God's sake," without taking any interest; he advised them on points of law, and befriended them in every way. The Russian peasants are not blind pedants—the common people never are. They have their prejudices against Jews as aliens, as well as against officials, nobles, and the priests. But after a time these prejudices are overcome by every individual whose conduct inspires confidence. Abraham was the most popular man in the district, a general adviser and arbiter in many family disputes. The peasants never gave him any reason for complaint. Great was therefore his surprise when, soon after the Anti-Jewish riots in Kieff, a crowd of peasants came to his mill and told him that their object was to break his mill to pieces and loot his house. Abraham protested, expostulated, reminded them of his many services and of their friendly relations for many years past. The peasants admitted all that, and said that they were very sorry, but were bound

to do it, because such were the orders of the Tzar. Abraham was educated enough to understand that such a notion was perfectly absurd. But his arguments were of no avail. At last he hit upon a good idea. He proposed to go with a deputation of persons to the *Stanovoi,* the chief of police of the district, who, as an official of the Tzar, must know if such an order was given. To this the peasants agreed, and Abraham, with the elder and the sotsky of the village, hurried to the stanovoi, the crowd waiting from midday till late in the night for their return, smoking their pipes, talking with his family, and doing no harm. Of course the stanovoi assured the deputation that they were talking nonsense, and that there was no order for the destruction of Jewish property. When this was communicated to the crowd at the mill, the peasants declared themselves very much pleased, and returned peacefully to their homes.

The story is perfectly authentic. I got it from a friend of mine, a student, who spent his holidays in the district.

Another friend of mine, a Jewess by birth, who was assistant to a doctor, told me of her experiences in a village near Ekaterinoslav

By her indefatigable zeal in the service of her patients and disinterestedness, she not merely won their confidence, but even their sincere affection. She had many devoted friends in the village, especially among the women folk. They proved their devotion by coming one day to warn her that she had better leave the place where she was no longer safe, because an order had come for despoiling the Jews. The neighbouring towns had already done their duty, and the people of the place were saying that they must not lag behind. Deeply grieved, the lady asked whether it was really possible that the peasants should do any harm to her, whom they have always called their friend. "Oh," the women replied, "everybody in the village loves you and will pity you. But what can they do? The orders are not to spare any one; and they must obey, whether they like it or not." The women offered to hide in their houses the pieces of valuable property she had, in order that she should not suffer real damage in case of the attack, which they considered unavoidable. Many similar instances may be quoted.

There can be no doubt that in 1882-3 the bulk of the Southern peasantry were under the

sway of a superstitious belief in the existence of orders for attacking the Jews, just as in 1880 and 1881 they believed in the nearness of a millennium, when the whole land would be taken by the Tzar from the nobles and distributed among the peasantry.

So common was this belief that even the soldiers, as peasants by origin, shared in it. An eye-witness tells, that seeing the looting of Jewish shops in Uman, while a detachment of soldiers was watching the disorders without making any attempt to stay them, he asked one of them, why they were in the place at all.

"Dlya poryadku"—to preserve order—the soldier replied stolidly. "That the people who loot the Jewish shops should not break those of the Christians."

Whence could this absurd belief have originated? What can have been at the bottom of it?

Count Ignatiev, the future author of the shameful May edicts, was then Minister of the Interior. I do not think one can call him a Jew-hater. That title may very well be bestowed upon the Tzar, Alexander III., who, when inspecting troops at Moscow, would order all the privates of Jewish extraction (a Jew can never rise in the army above the grade of private) to

be consigned to the barracks, and even on his death-bed in Livadia could not bear the thought that some Jews in as bad a plight as himself were trying to restore their health in the benignant climate of the place, and ordered them to move out of the neighbourhood.

But Count Ignatiev? Could a man such as he was really have any genuine disinterested feeling of hatred? I doubt it very much. Yet he assumed the part of a Jew-hater to humour the antipathies of his master; and he has shown it in many ways. Besides, it became very soon known that he had a personal grudge against the Jews of St. Petersburg for having refused him an enormous bribe which he wanted to extort from them.

He was credited with a fierce desire to wreak vengeance upon the whole race, and one need not be surprised that by the Jews and some foreign writers he was held to have been the secret instigator of these disorders.

Mr. Harold Frederic speaks of bands of young men from St. Petersburg roaming about the country, and invariably appearing in a town a day or two before the outbreak of a riot, and doing their work of *agents provocateurs* so impudently that they could be easily detected.

I venture to think that it is all pure fancy. I do not deny the possibility of provocation and incitements. On the contrary, in many cases there were undoubtedly both incitements and provocation, but local ones, proceeding from people who had some interest to gain or some grudge to gratify. But one cannot for one moment admit the possibility of an organized provocation, still less of one, proceeding from anyone like Ignatiev, as Mr. Harold Frederic seems to think. He was not a man to conceive and carry out a plan of such a diabolical vengeance, and it could not have been carried out by anyone without exposure.

The first outbreaks were spontaneous; they were the manifestation of a deep discontent within the masses of the people, who did not understand any of the real causes of their sufferings, and wanted some sort of outlet for their hidden fury. The Jews became the expiatory victims, pointed out by their racial prejudices.

The provocation of which Count Ignatiev was truly guilty was an indirect one; it was to his influence that was due the strange attitude of the Government in the places where the first riots broke out. No steps were taken to put down the violence of the crowd in its incipient

stages, though it might have been done easily without bloodshed. The troops which were sent to the place of disorder simply surrounded the rioters and seemed to protect *them*, instead of protecting the Jews whom they attacked.

For such negligence, amounting to connivance, Count Ignatiev, as Minister of the Interior, is certainly responsible; and, if anything, it was bound to create within the masses the impression that it was permissible to ill-use the Jews. And from this to the legend of the existence of a Tzar's "order," there is but a step.

People who are quite trustworthy, and do not mean it as a joke, assure us that the germs of the future riot were thrown into the masses a year before the outbreak took place, and this, curiously enough, had been done, quite inadvertently of course, by the Tzar's manifesto denouncing the Nihilists, and calling upon all his faithful subjects to assist the police in exterminating them. The official name for the Nihilists is *kramolniki*, which means in Russian, rebels, State criminals. Now, in the south of Russia the pedlars and retail traders, who are all Jews, are popularly called *kramorniki*. For illiterate peasants, who only heard the manifesto

and could not understand fully the meaning of its long-winded pompous phraseology, it was easy to confound the two words and to come to the conclusion that the *kramorniki*, or Jews, were at the bottom of the mischief, and had to be exterminated.

The psychology of crowds is a very queer one. A suspicion, a suggestion thrown into it will assume sometimes wild proportions, get a life of its own, and become no longer governable or manageable. Yet I will not vouch for the explanation, and merely repeat what we find in the Russian press. To me the indirect provocation of the apparent connivance of the authorities in the riots seems quite sufficient to account for the wild rumours.

Then came Ignatiev's May edicts, which virtually threw the blame of these riots upon the misconduct of the Jews, and, in the circumstances, could not but confirm the conviction of the masses that the Government was on the side of the rioters.

The iniquitous law was suspended a few months after its promulgation, owing, I believe, to the influence of foreign public opinion, which the Tzar, new as yet to power, did not at that time dare to disregard.

A contrary view is expressed by Mr. Harold Frederic, who maintains that the suspension of the May Laws and the fall of Count Ignatiev was due to the Tzar having got convincing proofs of the bad faith of his minister, and his gross abuse of power. The fact of his having offered immunity from the May Laws to the Jews of the capital for an enormous bribe of one million roubles is perfectly authentic. It was negotiated between him and the representatives of the Synagogue in the form of the purchase of one of his estates for a fancy price, exceeding its real value by one million roubles. I have the fact from a man who knew the whole story first-hand. Mr. Harold Frederic informs us that to him it was told by men who had been entrusted with the negotiations. He mentions the three reasons which caused the affair to collapse, of which the concluding one is the most characteristic; there was no possibility of trusting Count Ignatiev's word. He might have pocketed the bribe and not have fulfilled his promise.

The May Laws appeared before the stupefied world in their entirety, prohibiting hundreds of thousands of Jews from living in certain cities, as well as from remaining in the country, on the plea that their presence was injurious to the

native population. But Count Ignatiev took care to exempt his own estates from the effects of his own edicts by surreptitiously renewing the leases of all his Jewish farmers.

The Count's successful trick and the story of his unsuccessful extortion having been brought to the Tzar, the minister got into disgrace, and his edicts, without being repealed, were put into abeyance. Whether this was due to the latter cause or to the former, or both, it matters little. The Tzar's policy became more tolerant once again, but only for a time. His hostility towards the Jews was not altered. Now the ball comes to the player. Rulers easily get advice they are looking for. Eight years later Alexander III. lent his ear to Pobedonoszev, a man of incorruptible bigotry, against whom no damaging fact could be revealed, and he followed his advice unflinchingly.

The May edicts of Count Ignatiev forbid the Jews (1) to settle in villages, and (2) to acquire or rent real estates within the Pale of settlement. In 1890 they were revived under the following most aggravating conditions: The eight years' suspension was ignored, and the edict declared to have been in force since May, 1882. This actually was giving it a retrospective force for the

full eight years. All the scores of thousands who settled in villages in full confidence during this period were therefore to be evicted.

But the evident intention of the Government was to expel from the open country in the shortest possible time all the Jews who were settled there. This was manifested by a series of additional edicts, which rendered life utterly unbearable to those who wished to remain.

An early ukase of the Senate, November, 1887, explained that the right of residence granted to old settlers was strictly localized. A Jew living in the village A has no right to move his residence to the village B, half a mile distant. The right was also made strictly individual. Children cannot receive their aged mother or father coming from town or another village. The right did not extend even to the wife, although by the Russian common law all the rights and privileges of husbands belong to their wives. There are dozens of cases within my knowledge of Jews residing in villages who married in towns, and had been ordered by the police either to leave the villages or to send their wives away, for as town women they had no right to be in open country. Family ties, recognized as being the

most sacred in the community, are broken daily in Russia where Jews are concerned. I will quote from the *Voskhod* (January 21st, 1891) a case of this nature in Kieff, where ten Jewish families were thus broken up. Ten women, wives of Jewish artisans, whose names are given in full, were expelled from the town, because it was discovered that one of them had one cow and sold to her neighbours a few jugs of milk, and the others tried to add to the modest earnings of their husbands by baking bread, sewing shirts, and the like, which they carried on market days to the market and sold. They were set down on this score as merchants, and expelled from town in twenty-four hours, because only Jewish artisans are allowed to breathe the air of Kieff. And the husbands? The children of these ten families? Well, they could remain behind, of course. They were only Jews!

In the law depriving the Jews of the right of settlement in the open country there is a special clause, of little moment, but very characteristic of the spirit animating the late Government. I mean the clause which expressly says that Jewish patients are no exception, and that a Jew cannot go to the country, even temporarily,

for health! People able to meditate upon and draw such clauses cannot be expected to care about breaking up Jewish families.

But let us return to the general measures against the rural Jews. One of the most important, and at the same time most vexatious, is the restriction of their right of movement. They must remain as prisoners within the boundaries of the district, if they do not want to forfeit their right of settlement. If they go to town and spend there only a few nights, they are liable to be considered on their return as new settlers and evicted on that score. Near Gomel there are many villages where there is no synagogue. In 1888 a number of Jewish families went to celebrate in the synagogue of the town. On their return they were evicted by the *ispravnik*, Elensky. This is the commonest trick, practised all over the Pale, and the Jews living at some distance from towns have either to give up religious observances or their privilege of residence. Young Jews who have to go to serve in the army are regularly expelled as new settlers on returning to their families. The Jewish artisans, who have, according to law, the privilege of free settlement in all the towns and villages outside the

Pale, are evicted wholesale under the pretext that it is not specified whether the general franchise includes the right of settlement within the Pale.

According to Russian law, no new building and no repairs can be made without the authorization of the administration. Now the administration refuses systematically all such authorizations to Jews living in rural districts, in order that the buildings may fall into decay. They must move to towns or live in houses falling to pieces. If the house is consumed by fire, they are never allowed to rebuild.

Arable lands and pastures, which means farms, cannot be taken in Russia on long leases. Twelve years is the maximum allowed by the law, although it may be stipulated that at the expiration of this term the tenant has a right to renew the agreement; but the land agents are expressly prohibited from registering such renewals when the farmers are Jews. As the May edicts extend eight years back, it is evident that in the current year (1895), all the regular Jewish farmers will be evicted from the Pale, because the new Tzar has not altered any of the anti-Jewish laws of his father. There is a considerable class of special farmers of

Jewish extraction, known as *Chinsh* men, whose tenure and rentals are permanent, being based upon customary law. The *Chinsh* people are virtual owners, the nominal landlord having no right either to increase their rentals or to evict them as long as they pay their rent. These rights are recognized in the case of Christians, but never in the case of Jews. There are, according to official statistics, 36,429 Jewish families holding small pieces of land by virtue of the *Chinsh* right. They are all now absolutely at the mercy of the cupidity or the caprice of their nominal landlords. The tribunals always decide these *Chinsh* disputes against the Jews, and the members of our highest class are not ashamed to take advantage of their helplessness. Prince Abimelek evicted a whole village, Pavlovka, district of Tiraspol, peopled for over thirty years by *Chinsh* Jews. The Princes Gorchakoff, Michael, and Konstantin, sons of the Chancellor, did the same with their Brailov Jews, who had been in undisturbed possession of the land for forty or fifty years.

Sometimes the outrages against the rights of property are accompanied by shocking outrages of moral feelings. A certain Mr. Demy, a land-

lord in Bessarabia, has been at law for ten years with the Jewish *Chinsh* people of Kopreshty about the piece of land upon which their houses and synagogue are built. The matter of the synagogue, the only one in the neighbourhood, and built over forty years ago, caused the Jews to exert themselves most strenuously. The affair dragged on, passing from one tribunal to another. The synagogue, pending the decision, was, as a matter of course, in the possession of the defendants. But in the summer of 1890, on the eve of the approaching Jewish holidays, Mr. Demy persuaded the Police Inspector, Luchinsky, to take possession in his name of the Jewish house of prayer, and Luchinsky, knowing well that with Jews anything can be done with impunity, proceeded to carry out his friend's request. He arrived at Kopreshty, entered the synagogue, took possession of all the sacred rolls, and sent them in a cart to the police-station. Mr. Demy was then installed in possession of the Jewish house of prayer, and he immediately drove into it a herd of pigs, which remained there all day and the following night. The *ispravnik*, Luchinsky's superior officer, ordered the animals to be taken away, and restored the sacred books to the Jews. But

the authors of this practical joke went scot-free. (*Voskhod*, February, 1891.)

These are facts the authenticity of which cannot possibly be doubted, for I have taken them from a paper published in Russia under the vigilant eye of the censorship. It is a very bold thing to publish such facts at all. It would be disastrous to invent or exaggerate.

At various times there have been attempts to form Jewish agricultural colonies. The plan seems to me to be somewhat artificial, and not likely to succeed upon a large scale in Russia—at least, where it depends entirely upon the manual skill of the husbandman, which requires a long training. The Jews do not shun manual labour. There are 300,000 Jewish artisans within the Pale, and 200,000 outside of it. Nine-tenths of the rest are pedlars, shop-boys, and the like, whose physical work is certainly no lighter than that of artisans and mechanics. But it is very difficult for such workers to return to agriculture, and why should they? Yet these projects were always warmly received by the Jews, and, notwithstanding the most unfavourable conditions created for these colonies by the stupidity, suspiciousness, and meddlesome spirit of the bureaucracy, some of these agricultural colonies

continue to thrive. There are about 50,000 Jewish farmers in Russia, but they do not find much grace with the Russian Government. They do not fall under the action of May edicts, but whenever the administration finds a pretext, the Jewish husbandmen are evicted as ruthlessly as other Jews. The agricultural colony of Sytna, which has existed for fifty-three years, near Minsk; Orany, another colony of forty years' standing, near Vilna; half-a-dozen colonies in Bessarabia and in the province of Kamenez Podolsk, have been evicted and dispersed. Thus a score of thousands of prosperous farmers, gardeners, tobacco planters, who worked the land with their own hands, and were an example of sobriety and diligence, were turned out downright paupers, the pretext being now that the land was rented—sometimes for over half a century—not owned; now that the village stood too near the frontier.

These facts are interesting to us from one particular point of view. The Russian Government and its defenders profess that Jewish persecutions have exclusively for an object the protection of the peasants against Jewish usurers. The claim is preposterous. In the Pale the Jews are the chief money-lenders, to

whom the masses of the peasantry are inextricably indebted. But outside the Pale there are no Jews in villages. Yet the masses of the peasants are indebted to local money-lenders and usurers of Christian faith as much as they are indebted to Jews within the Pale. Usury is a terrible scourge of agricultural Russia; but it springs from the general economical conditions of the country—exorbitant taxes, combined with insufficiency of land—which compel peasants to borrow money anywhere on any terms. The expulsion of Jews will result to the advantage of Christian usurers, who will be left without competitors. That is the only possible effect of the expulsion of Jews from villages.

The May edicts, whose working we have described, form but a part of a general plan of campaign. There are about three-quarters of a million of privileged Jews living outside the Pale—artisans, merchants of the first guild, members of the learned professions, and their families, to whom these franchises are given by the laws of 1865 and 1867. The next move after the revival of the May edicts was to drive the Jews out of the country at large, and the energy shown by the administration promises that

very shortly most of these 750,000 will go to swell the Jewish paupers in the towns and hamlets of the Pale.

The richest Jews, the merchants of the first guild, are alone left comparatively unmolested, while the poor artisans gaining their bread by the sweat of their brow are the chief sufferers. There are no end of tricks resorted to in order to deprive them of the franchises granted to them by the law. In one place certain handicrafts are declared to be excluded from the list of callings which the franchises cover. In Moscow the compositors were declared to be artists, and not mechanics, and therefore the Jews following this trade were expelled from the capital. In Smolensk the glaziers, vinegar makers, bakers, and butchers have been also declared not to be artisans, but something else—and the administration did not say what. In Simbirsk the Council of the Guilds passed a resolution not to give to Jewish artisans any licences unless they passed a special examination in their respective crafts. This was illegal and absurd, the skill of the artisans being proved by their certificates, and still better by their good work. But this was exactly what the Simbirsk guild-masters would not tolerate. Their special commissioners

declared the Jews almost to a man not proficient in their trade, and the administration immediately expelled them and their families from the town. In Uffa the same result was obtained by the opposite means. Here it was the administration that took the initiative and declared all local certificates inefficient and void —for the Jews alone, of course. The Jewish artisans were requested to present certificates from the towns of their origin, which means from the Pale, which some of them had left twenty years before, and upon their being unable to comply with this foolish demand, they were expelled in a body. In other places the police pounce on Jewish artisans on Saturday, and, finding them and their families at rest, issue an order of expulsion against them, on the pretext that they are not artisans, as they do not work with their hands.

An old law of Nicolas I. has served the administration a good turn for wholesale expulsions. This law is directed against a small religious sect—the so-called Sabbatarians, who keep Saturday as the day of prayer. These have always shown a great leaning toward the old Mosaic and Rabbinical law, and willingly accepted Jewish Rabbis as their pastors. It

was therefore enacted, by way of precaution, that the Jews should not be allowed to settle in the localities where these sects existed. Now the administration has inverted the law. The discovery or the arrival of one Sabbatarian in a town is considered a sufficient reason for expelling all the Jews from the place.

This expedient was used for the first time last year in Samara. A Sabbatarian, M., was exiled to this town by administrative order. The day after his arrival all the Jews were ordered to close up their business and to be off to the Pale. The same trick was resorted to afterwards in Orel. Such devices are always tried elsewhere, if they seem worth while. Some day we may hear that the Government has used the Sabbatarians as a sort of Jew-killing instrument, scattering a few hundreds of them broadcast in all the towns of the Empire to render it impossible for Jews to remain anywhere. But it is just as likely that they will do without any such trick; when they have no pretext they will do the same without a pretext. The Governors vie with each other in the exhibition of anti-Jewish zeal to win the good graces of the Minister. The Jews are expelled from Siberia, which ought surely to be considered a

bad enough place for even Jews to be allowed to live in. They are expelled from the Caucasus, although the official statistics collected in the course of four years (1886-1890) testify that fully 60 per cent. of them are artisans and 10 per cent. manufacturers and members of learned professions. They are expelled from the newly-acquired provinces of Central Asia, where their help might do so much toward developing the local industries, and where they are undoubtedly a Russianizing element.

The mode of carrying out these evictions and expulsions is barbarous in the extreme, the underlings in their turn trying to distinguish themselves in the eyes of their superiors. In Kieff, in February, 1891, 1000 shop assistants and shopkeepers of Jewish extraction, with their families, were arrested and expelled in a little more than twenty-four hours, without being allowed to prepare themselves for the journey. At eight o'clock in the morning the police broke into their houses, awakening many of them from sleep, and they were immediately taken to the police-station. The shopkeepers were fined 1300 roubles each, the shop assistants 600 roubles each, and the next day at noon they were all packed into railway carriages and sent

off to the Pale. These people were all respectable tradesmen, with legal licences, for which they had all paid in December, 1890. They had their shops in the best streets of the town, and were not accused of any wrong-doing. But there is a new order prohibiting Jews from keeping shops in Kieff, and these people did not hasten to clear the ground on their own account without a special notice. For this offence all their stock was confiscated.

The chase after the Jews and their spoils is extended to the Baltic Provinces. Jews are expelled from Mitava, Libau, Jacobstadt, and Riga, sometimes after forty years of undisturbed residence. In Riga a rich merchant, Blumenthal, owner of three mills and of two large shops, had all his stock confiscated, and was ordered to leave within twenty-four hours. In Libau the value of the goods confiscated amounts to 200,000 roubles. In Dinaburg the administration, confiscating the stocks of the Jewish merchants, took possession also of 70,000 roubles of the "box-money," destined, according to a Jewish custom, for schools, and devoted the proceeds to the building of an orthodox church. In St. Petersburg the Prefect of the town, General Gresser, robbed the Jews in

another way, by ordering them (March 15th, 1891) to change the store firm names they had acquired from Russians, putting instead their own names, "in order," the edict runs, "that the public should see at once that the shop is a Jewish one." In Moscow, on the nights of April 11th, 12th, and 13th, the police broke in upon 167 families, who were all carefully searched and sent to the police-stations under escort as criminals—mothers, children, old men—to be afterwards conveyed to the Pale. From a town in the Pale a perfectly trustworthy eye-witness writes: "Every day crowds of our people are brought here, chained like criminals, ragged, hungry. The time allowed them for settling their affairs was so short that they could not dispose of their property. In Moscow suites of Vienna chairs, worth 4*l.*, were sold for one shilling. Complete furniture for a room was sold for six shillings. The families were cast out of their houses into the streets, their furniture was thrown out, and they were left without shelter. It is just as bad as at the riots."

These are facts taken from private letters of friends and relatives, never intended for print.

I will not dwell upon the third measure against the Jews, although it is, perhaps, still

more sweeping than the two former. I mean the wholesale expulsion of Jews from the fifty versts (thirty-three miles) strip of border-land along the western frontier. The same scenes, the same brutalities, the same misery accompany them. The ostensible reason of this measure is the prevention of smuggling. That there is much smuggling along this frontier is quite true. It is also true that the smuggling, like so many other trades, is chiefly in the hands of Jews. But there are 250,000 Jews settled upon that strip of land, and a quarter of a million people cannot possibly live there by smuggling. There is smuggling upon all frontiers. What would people think of a proposal to make it a desert by expelling the whole of the border population as a preventive of smuggling? And yet this is just what the Government is doing with regard to Jews. All are to be expelled, without exception. Even members of learned professions—lawyers, professors, physicians, rabbis—are not allowed to settle near the frontier, the administration pretending to see smugglers in all of them. The total number of human beings affected by the persecution is therefore overwhelming.

English readers know very well from not

very distant Irish history what human miseries are represented by the word "eviction." But in Russia we have not a handful of tenants surrounded by a friendly population, but over a million of men, women, and children, evicted or in the way of being evicted, helpless, destitute—a picture of suffering which defies comparison. We must recall to our memory the expulsion and starving out of the 800,000 of Mauresques from Spain to have an idea of what has been inflicted nowadays upon the Jews.

The 1,500,000 Jews cooped in the towns and hamlets of the Pale were never very prosperous. The greater number of them lived in extreme and sometimes degrading poverty, because of the fierce competition. The terrible, harrowing pages of the accounts of a commission of professors, published in the *St. Petersburg Economical Magazine* in 1882, are there to testify to it. We read there of thousands of men, women, and children living in hovels not fit for dogs; of families of ten and more huddled together in a room having sufficient air for only one person; of squalid misery, slow starvation, dirty promiscuity which makes one sick only to think of it. Now another million at least of people were thrown in, expelled from all parts of Russia—

people entirely destitute, who come as competitors for public charity and for work. The state of things brought about in these towns is easier to imagine than to describe. It is a starving out—one of those miseries seldom seen except in besieged towns, when pestilence breaks out and men return to the state of savage nature.

But material sufferings are not the only scourge of this unfortunate people. There is the paternal Government to goad them into utter despair by petty tyranny, extortion, abuse, insult, humiliation of all kinds. They are at the mercy of everyone vile enough to lift his hand against a defenceless people. In Odessa the Jews are threatened with exile if they have the impudence to try to get good places in the tramways and railway carriages. In Rostislavl they are told that they will be flogged upon the market-place if the Jewish children make a noise in the streets. In Kieff their hospital has been closed because it happens to stand within a hundred yards of a Christian church ; a benevolent institution, simply because it is Jewish, being thus likened to a low tavern or a house of ill-fame. In the same town the Governor, a particularly pious gentleman, pro-

hibited the Jews from passing through certain streets where there are many churches. When a small anti-Jewish disturbance occurred in the town, a handful of drunken roughs breaking into some Jewish houses, destroying property, and insulting the inmates, a deputation of Jews waited upon the Governor, who refused to take action, and replied in these words: "I am very sorry that disturbances occurred in my province, but I cannot prevent them; for the people must once for all get rid of the Jews, who defile our holy town."

In such circumstances it is natural that the Jews should live in constant dread of riots. All the time rumours of new and drastic measures keep the Jews in a state of constant terror and suspense. The St. Petersburg press has announced such news as the contemplation by the Jewish committee of a plan for the gradual restriction of the Pale of Settlement; of the expulsion of Jews from certain streets, and of the creation of real mediæval *ghettoes;* of further restriction of the education of Jewish children; of closing various professions to Jews; of even a special compulsory dress, which would single them out among other people.

In a private letter from Vilna, we read:

"It is rumoured that even the merchants of the first guild will be expelled from Russian towns, and prohibited from returning under penalty of flogging by the police without any preliminary trial. It is even rumoured that this brutal order has been carried out in some places. You will understand what is our position and what we have to expect in the future. We are all of us here as men who have lost their mind from grief, with eyes swollen with tears, looking with despair upon each other's faces. Our hearts are torn to pieces on hearing on all sides news about the suffering of our unfortunate people. Pen cannot describe all the depth of our misery. But you will understand it, I hope, yourself."

Foreign wars are an expedient often tried by despots to blunt the liberal aspirations and deaden the internal discontent of nations. But war is a dangerous game, which may turn either way. The Russian Government has hit upon something better. In starting a sort of civil war against an enemy which cannot fight, it has avoided all the risks of a foreign war, while securing its advantages. But not with all the Russians. The truly patriotic, humane, enlightened Russian, without distinction of parties,

social position, or creed, is indignant at the barbarous persecution of Jews, which disgraces our country and demoralizes our people. Even at the Court, among the highest dignitaries of the State, there are men who have had the courage and wisdom to oppose the present anti-Semitic policy. The Commission for settling the Jewish question, appointed in 1881 under the presidency of Count Pahlen, favoured the abolition of the Pale of Settlement and the enfranchisement of the Jew as the means of settling the Jewish problem in Russia. But the Emperor agreed with the minority, which was for a further increase of restrictions. The Bishop of Kherson and Odessa, Nicanor, delivered a sermon against the persecution of Jews as contrary to the spirit of Christian charity. He was reprimanded by the Holy Synod. The Rev. Mr. Nemiroff, of Moscow, who committed a similar offence, was dismissed. Count Lev Tolstoi's petition, in favour of tolerance and humanity towards the Jews, has been withdrawn from circulation by order of the police. The papers that dare defend the Jews are visited with administrative punishment. A circular note of the Minister of the Interior has been sent to all the newspapers, forbidding them to

publish anything against anti-Semitism. This is a fact which I have from perfectly authentic sources. One of our largest morning papers, the *Novosti* (News), of St. Petersburg, which was the most prominent in defending the cause of tolerance, for some time past has published no news whatever about the Jews in Russia. Thus the Government has well cleared the ground by silencing all who could say one sensible, humane word in opposition to the anti-Jewish outcry. The coarse, scurrilous papers trading upon the ignorance, racial prejudices, and superstitions of the crowd are, on the contrary, allowed free scope in vilifying and abusing the Jews, against whom all the evils of Russia are charged, the deterioration of the Russian climate and the shallowing of Russian rivers included.

Racial hostility is a feeling easily excited. In connection with the Jews there is, moreover, the question of economical and professional rivalry. The heads of our industries, in justice it must be acknowledged, have shown sufficient insight into the real interests of the country. In the well-known petition to the Governor of Moscow, drawn in connection with the expulsion of Jews from Moscow, the representatives of all the leading firms of that town asked for

the granting to Jews of the right of settling in the capital, in the interests of Russian commerce, which the Jews have contributed so much toward extending. But how many there are who will be glad to have the dangerous rivals removed; how many who will seize the opportunity of trampling upon somebody for the mere pleasure of feeling that they are something superior! No wonder that, after a while, the Government found itself not alone in waging its inglorious war upon the Jews. If in highly cultured Germany the Jew-baiting started by Prince Bismarck found supporters among literary people, politicians, and scholars, it is nothing surprising that the same thing was repeated in Russia.

The Russian Government has achieved a masterly stroke of domestic policy in starting the Jewish persecutions. It has but one inconvenience, the risk of provoking too strong a disapprobation abroad, both among the powerful Jewish element and all educated people of the civilized world. Hence the attempts on the part of the Russian Government to hush up, to make light of, or to completely deny the fact of the Jewish persecutions in Russia. Hence the constant repetition of alleged protests of

Russian Jews against all foreign interference, their alleged rejection of all assistance except that of the Tzar himself, whom they are represented as trusting implicitly—a strange loyalty, which, if it were true, would give the lie direct to the accepted idea that the Jews, whatever else they be, are certainly a clever race. But it is not true, and I could bring many proofs to refute it. As to the Government, it seems to me that the fact that it is particularly anxious to have foreign agitation hushed up is a sign that it is precisely the weapon that can be effectively used against it.

The Jewish question is, above all, an international question, because it affects all nations. For economical, political, and moral reasons it is the right and the duty of foreign countries to interfere. We representatives of the Russian opposition never wished for, or expected or advocated, foreign interference in Russia's domestic affairs. The Russians are fighting their own national Government, and no interference, except that of public opinion, can be suffered in that internal feud. But the Jews are not oppressed by a national Government of their own. Their position is strictly the same as that of the Bulgarians or Armenians under the

Turkish dominion. If the diplomacy of the civilized world thought interference incumbent upon it, why should it keep aloof on the Jewish question? The only difference is that the Sultan is weak and the Tzar is strong. Will that consideration prevent the statesmen of the civilized nations from entering up a solemn protest?

As to foreign Jews, it seems to me that the present condition of affairs in Russia imposes upon them special obligations. They are bound to help their brothers in their extremity. Nobody denies that. One can only regret that the traditional timidity and diffidence of their race has caused them to avoid up to the present any energetic action in the matter. Let me recall a precedent. About forty years ago the first Russian political refugee, Alexander Herzen, settled in London and founded the first Russian free press and paper, called the *Bell*. He was a wealthy man, and before starting for his voluntary exile he converted all his landed property into bonds of the State. On coming to England he wanted to realize on these bonds; but it somehow happened that the Government knew the numbers of Herzen's bonds, and the Tzar, Nicolas I., thought he could ruin his enemy by ordering the bank of the State to refuse his

bonds as worthless. The bank obeyed, as a matter of course, although it was contrary to law. But Herzen found a strong man to take care of his interest, Mr. Rothschild the elder, who sent to the Tzar's Government a note intimating that since the bonds in question were in all respects as good as other Russian bonds, he would consider their rejection as an evidence of insolvency and would declare the Tzar of all the Russias a bankrupt upon all the Stock Exchanges of Europe. The Tzar Nicolas put his pride into his pocket and ordered the bank to accept Herzen's bonds. This story is perfectly authentic, and Herzen relates in his *Bell*, very wittily and in all details, how "King Rothschild sent his orders to Emperor Nicolas and the Emperor obeyed."

The present Russian Government cannot stand without being subsidized from without. It is a pity citizens of free nations subsidize it at all, for in so doing they uphold the tyrants against the people. But for Jews to support the present Tzar is the same as it would have been for the French capitalists to have subsidized the Prussian army marching upon Paris. The Jews control the money market of the world. By combining they might have cut off the Russian

Tzars "with a shilling," and obtained what they will never get by supplication, solicitations, and entreaties, made sometimes at the expense of their dignity. There is no impressing Russian Tzars by obsequiousness; they have been too much stuffed with it at home. The Jews should have shown fight, and they would have won the battle. But they did not show fight. An influential member of the Jewish community in London, to whom I talked once of this plan, said that it was not realizable because the Jews did not control the money market to such an extent as is generally supposed. Upon this I cannot judge. Anyhow, the Tzar Alexander III. met with no opposition, and had all his own way. He carried on his expulsion scheme, and no less than one million unfortunate men, women, and children had their homes ruined, and had to tread the painful, thorny pathway of exile.

The immense mass of suffering of the Russian Jews must be set entirely at the door of Alexander III. He was the cause of it, and it is childish to throw the blame of it upon such or such of his advisers.

IX.

THE POLES AND THE FINNS.

THE persecution of the Poles went on uninterruptedly as a matter of course without exciting much comment or even attention. People would have been surprised if under a Tzar like Alexander III., a nation embodying the idea of Revolution had been left unmolested. Every now and then the English and German press published brief bits of news about fresh severities in Poland, just enough to satisfy the reader that the prearranged order of things existed undisturbed, and that he need not devote more attention to the subject.

True: the fact that thirty years after the insurrection Poland was still kept under martial law was in itself a flagrant violation of the prearranged order of things. But on foreign subjects public attention must be caught at once by something striking and sudden, or it will never be caught at all.

The civilized world has contemplated unmoved the brutal efforts of the Russian Government to murder a whole nation by forcing the Poles to become what they abhorred becoming.

Alexander III. did more than persecute the Catholic religion and impose civil disabilities upon its followers. His object was a thorough Russification of Poland, and his main efforts were directed towards the destruction of what constitutes the distinction, the pride, and the intellectual wealth of the nation—its language. For a nation which has lost its language is cut adrift from its past, and ceases to be a nation.

The means taken to stamp out the Polish language showed an unheard-of stupidity and disregard for the most sacred rights of man. It was made a crime for Poles to speak Polish in public places, streets, and meetings, or to teach in that language in any school, the primary ones included, although the children of peasants and working men did not know Russian. In Warsaw there is a home for the deaf and dumb, in which these unfortunate persons are given some instruction to mitigate their frightful isolation from the rest of their fellow-men. In 1893 the head of the educational department, Apukhtin, ordered that the institute should not be an

exception, and that the teaching should be in Russian. The inmates had to be taught to spell with their fingers the Russian alphabet and compose with it Russian words. So that these unfortunate creatures, who were for the most part peasants, on returning to their native villages, could not make the slightest use of the training given to them at the institute, and were plunged again into that awful isolation from which their kind-hearted friends had tried to rescue them.

This is certainly a unique example of cruel and stupid official pedantry. But equally cruel and stupid was the general policy of the central government, for was not the partial suppression of the sole language spoken by the enormous majority of the people equivalent to partially depriving them of all speech?

The Russian Government has committed many acts of cruelty and tyranny, but it is difficult to point out anything so cynically despotic as this forcing men into the condition of dumb creatures.

During thirty years this policy of oppression went on in Poland. But it seemed as though Europe grudged that unhappy country the absorbing interest of which it had been the centre in the first half of this century.

Even such acts as the massacre of Roman Catholics at Krozy, where Cossacks killed and wounded over thirty unarmed men and women, plundered a church, breaking to pieces all that could not be taken away—even such acts of mediæval barbarity and vandalism only momentarily disturbed the world's indolent apathy. No cry of *Vive la Pologne* was flung into the face of the Russian Tzars whilst travelling abroad. The Poles were left to defend their nationality and religion as best they could. And they were not found wanting. The policy of Russification failed completely.

A country of a higher culture cannot possibly be denationalized by a country of an inferior culture, no matter how great the disparity in their size. Colonization on a vast scale is the only means of permanently altering the ethnical physiognomy of any given locality. Now, Russian peasants with their primitive agricultural implements and primitive manner of life would be beaten in no time in competition with the Poles, and finally starved out. With the skilled workmen of the towns, the artisans, the difference is not so great, but they cannot be tied down to any place, as the Government is unable to secure them any privilege to compensate for their

natural disadvantages. The predominance in material strength is of no avail in this struggle. It is like oil and water in the same glass which are superposed by their natural gravity, no matter what effort you make to mix them.

As to the efforts to convert the Poles themselves into Russians by making them speak Russian, it was childish on the face of it, and only served to keep alive in all its intensity the hatred of Russian dominion in this often conquered but never subjugated country.

National feeling and desire for independence is as strong in Poland nowadays as ever, and the enforced familiarity with the Russian language has only helped the Polish middle class to take advantage of their industrial superiority over Russia, accumulating forces, which at the first opportunity will be turned against the Russian Government.

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While in Poland the Russian Government only fostered and augmented a hostile feeling created by the past, in Finland it has created such a feeling where it never existed before.

The persecution of the Finnish nationality, being something quite new and unexpected, has attracted a good deal of attention in this

country, and has been constantly pointed to in the English and German press as one of the most foolish and shocking among the many tyrannical acts of Alexander III. It was mean on the part of the Tzar of all the Russias to attack a small principality which was absolutely at his mercy. It was foolish wantonly to transform loyal friends into bitter enemies.

Finland is at the gates of the Russian capital, and the Finns are an entirely alien race. In fact the Poles have much more in common with the Russians than the Finns. To create another Poland at half an hour's distance from St. Petersburg is an easy affair, but hardly advisable from a strategical point of view. Nothing but good government can bind Finland to Russia, and it is prescribed by considerations of elementary political prudence.

When, in 1809, Finland was definitely annexed to Russia, Speransky, then minister and adviser of Alexander I., fully understood the position, and persuaded the Tzar to conciliate the Finns by fair dealing and respect for their national institutions. In 1810 Alexander I. solemnly swore for himself and his successors to preserve the ancient constitution of the country.

He did not exactly break his oath, though it

cannot be said that he kept it. The convocation of the Finnish *Seym*, or Parliament, for a short sitting to pass new laws and listen to the report of the Executive, was an essential part of the Finnish constitution. Whilst Finland was a vassal state to Sweden, it was customary to convene the *Seym* every four or five years. But the statute fixed no definite period for its convocation, leaving it to the discretion of the Grand Duke. On the strength of this, Alexander I., whose Liberalism was of a short duration, did not choose to convene the Finnish Parliament for the remaining fifteen years of his reign. The example was followed by his successors up to 1863, so that the Parliamentary recess lasted in Finland for full fifty-three years.

That this practical violation of so important a provision of the constitution led to no abuse of power on the part of the Finnish officials is a proof of the high standard of public morality in Finland. The Senate, which in Finland acts as both High Court of Justice and Executive, administered justice fairly, spent the public funds honestly and prudently, and, guided by the free press, passed many new laws under the form of administrative orders to meet the

exigencies of the time. There was no interference on the part of the Russian Government in the organic life of the country, and the Finns put up with the despotic caprices of their Grand Dukes. In the great trial of the Crimean war they proved most loyal to the Tzars. In 1863 Alexander II. summoned at last the Finnish Seym, which, in a long sitting of eight months, made a thorough revision and codification of the Finnish laws.

This was done in the early liberal years of that unhappy and misguided Tzar. But whilst in Russian affairs he completely changed his policy, and, repudiating his early liberalism became a thorough reactionist, his policy towards the Finns remained the same through all his reign, and he never had any grounds for repenting of it. He had no more loyal subjects than the Finns. Whilst the Tzar's capital and all the big towns of Russia swarmed with conspirators, Finland remained perfectly quiet. Among the many thousands who joined the Russian revolutionary movement, we do not know one Finn, except those who were educated in Russia and thoroughly Russianized. When the revolutionary propaganda in the army was initiated, it was enough for those conducting it to hear

that a certain officer was a born Finn to give up as hopeless the task of converting him into a revolutionist. The Finns were thankful to their Grand Duke, and did not mind what he was as the Tzar of all the Russias. It was selfishness on their part, but to some extent every one has a right to be selfish.

With the accession to the throne of Alexander III. the position remained unchanged—no abuse of their privileges on the part of the Finns, nothing to serve as a pretext for retaliation. It cannot be even alleged that the existence of a constitution in Finland caused any dangerous fermentation of feeling among the less favoured Russians. Finland is so far a foreign country that her anomalous position was considered as a matter of course, and did not impress the Russians any more than the existence of a free constitution in Sweden. The granting of a constitution to kindred Bulgaria in 1877 caused unquestionably more fermentation and unfavourable comments than its existence in Finland.

The encroachment upon the Finnish autonomy is but a part of the aggressive policy of centralized bureaucratism, which fancies it can transform the whole empire into a dead auto-

maton, obeying the will of the St. Petersburg wire-pullers. I have tried to show what havoc this despotic craze has made in Russia proper. In the so-called border provinces it does the same work under the banner—one would say, on the pretext—of their Russification.

Why one should wish to have the Poles, Finns, Germans, and Latyshes transformed into Russians, one fails to see. Their common country, supposing they should continue to be for ever united, would gain more by giving all nationalities free scope to develop their national genius than by bringing all to one dead level. But this is not the question we have to deal with. The fact is that Finland can as little, and even less than, Poland be assimilated to Russia. Russia can do it in the East, where her culture is superior to that of the natives; but not on her western outskirts.

The only way for Russia to increase her influence in these regions is to develop her own resources and culture, so as to bring it to a level with theirs. The present effort to bring about Russification by violent methods spreads the dominion of the St. Petersburg bureaucracy, and not the Russian influence. It can create nothing but hatred of the Russian name, it hampers

the material and intellectual progress of many promising nationalities, and destroys the good which they have already achieved.

The Finnish autonomy has proved, in all respects, superior to the Russian centralization. According to her constitution, Finland has her own finances, coins her own money, negotiates loans, and spends her own revenues. Whilst the Russian rouble is worth about 60 per cent. of its nominal value, the Finnish paper money stays at par. Finland can borrow money at 4½ per cent., whilst Russia cannot get it at less than 6 per cent. The Finnish national debt is purely nominal. It has been contracted for building railways, and spent with so much prudence that, whilst the Russian people pay over 40,000,000 roubles of guarantee money to railway shareholders, the Finnish railways, which are state property, pay their own debts, and leave a surplus, which is spent upon public schools. It has been calculated that each mile of Finnish railways, though built in a rocky country, with many tunnels and bridges, has cost, on the average, only one-third of what has been squandered upon Russian railways.

The economy and carefulness of public interests proper to a truly national government is

shown in all branches of administration. Though burdened by the will of the Tzar with a heavy military budget, Finland spends 11 per cent. of her revenue upon schools, which is about six times more than Russia. Her system of popular education can be compared to that of the United States; it is obligatory and free in primary schools, which have their own trained teachers, male and female. Ample provision is made for higher education, which is rendered accessible to the bulk of the people. There are in Finland a university, a military and a naval school, a seminary, a number of colleges, women's schools, and three first-class technical schools, where the education is almost free. The fees do not exceed 1*l.* a year for all theoretical and practical studies; but even these are remitted to all who apply for it on the ground of indigency, no matter how great their total number. Peculiar facilities are offered to those who wish to improve in some speciality.

No wonder that, with such a system of education, a country so ill-favoured by nature could hold her own and gain upon her huge neighbour. In 1854, the aggregate product of Finnish manufacturing industry was estimated at 5,000,000

roubles. In the twenty-five years that followed it increased *tenfold*, reaching the imposing figure of 49,000,000. The Finnish manufactories beat the Russian in paper, glass wares, and several other industries, causing protective customs to be created against her.

Whilst in Russia the peasants, who are the poorest class, bear all the burden of the taxes, paying to the State about one-half of their income, in Finland the families having less than 250 roubles yearly, which is about the average income of a Russian peasant family, are exempted from taxation, and those who have more pay from one-half per cent. to 2 per cent. of their income, according to its total amount. Thus Finland was among the first countries to introduce a graduated income tax.

No greater contrast can be imagined within the boundaries of the same empire.

In 1891 the St. Petersburg bureaucrats decided that there should be no contrast. They began their work of levelling at the right place. The first blow was struck at the most precious inheritance of the Finns—the freedom of the press, which was the guardian and guarantee of all their franchises.

By an Imperial ukase, the Finnish press was

subjected to the St. Petersburg officials, and the censorship introduced, with all its cavils, stupidity, and arbitrariness.

The public has been deprived of news, especially of the most interesting. Thus the fact that the Finnish Post Office has been amalgamated with the Russian was not allowed to appear until four days after it had been officially announced in St. Petersburg. The newspapers were stopped every day, whole editions being destroyed by order of the censors. Official "warnings," which, if thrice incurred, led to the suppression of the paper, and other punishments are raining upon the Finnish periodicals, the censors giving, as usual, no reasons or explanations of their proceedings. The editor of the *Hufvudstadsblatt* has been fined for not having been in town when the censor's messenger called on him. The editor of the *Nya Pressen*, one of the principal newspapers, got into trouble for having handed in a French translation of one of his articles upon Finnish prisons to the Prisons Congress, assembled at the time in St. Petersburg.

The subjection of the Finnish Post Department to Russian officials means the violation of the secrecy of private correspondence, which had

hitherto been respected in Finland, but never in Russia.

Several bureaucratic commissions were appointed, to prepare plans for the fusion of the Finnish Customs Administration with the Russian; for the abolition of the Finnish coinage; for the introduction of the Russian language in schools; for the establishment of the hierarchical supremacy of the orthodox Church, etc.

The two first innovations were introduced in Alexander III.'s lifetime. The others were in preparation when his death interrupted the reactionary crusade in Finland, and allowed her to breathe freely.

X.

THE STUNDISTS.

IT is known that in the south of Russia there exists an important and very promising religious sect, called by the colloquial name of Stundists. Being entirely a popular movement, it is one of the most remarkable signs of the intellectual awakening of the Russian masses.

The translation of the Gospel into the spoken language of the people, completed in the second quarter of this century, owing chiefly to the efforts of the English Bible Society, produced in Russia a spiritual movement very much akin to that which resulted from the same cause in Germany, England, and Scotland in the times of Martin Luther and John Knox. Religion, which formerly was the business of a small class of professional priests, became all at once a subject upon which the thoughts of all the most earnest and gifted men and women among the people were centred. In Russia, moreover, the

spiritual awakening, that resulted from easy access to the Gospel, coincided with a great reform—the abolition of serfdom, which opened a new era in the life of the masses of the Russian people. Whilst raising them from the condition of slaves to that of citizens, and giving them many facilities for widening their intelligence, the emancipation rapidly destroyed the groundwork of the ancient patriarchal order of things. It divided the formerly homogeneous peasantry into two classes, the rich and the poor, with all the complexity of relations and the evil feelings which great inequality of wealth creates in the community. For an earnest, public-spirited man—and they are not fewamong our peasants—there was much to ponder upon, much to blame, much to deplore in the life of the new village. He would apply to the facts he observed every day the test of religion, which for him embodied the whole of moral and social philosophy, and of course he would find that the life of the people was in flagrant contradiction with the creed they professed to adhere to. The orthodox clergy proved almost invariably incapable of understanding, still less of guiding these sorrowing souls yearning after truth and purity.

The peasants seeking for spiritual advice invariably try to find assistance from their village priests, and are invariably disappointed, often repelled with gross abuse, and must turn for their only guidance to the book which is admittedly the corner stone of their religion. The greater the discrepancy between its teaching and the doctrine of the Orthodox Church the more imperative the impulse to secede from it. Since the great schism of the middle of the seventeenth century, which was caused by the narrow, purely ritualistic differences, hardly a year has passed without a new sect springing up somewhere in the forests and marshes, to which the persecuted Old Believers repaired. But these sects were the meagre product of narrow ritualistic scholasticism and had no future before them. One must always keep in mind the dense ignorance of these people to account for their taking seriously matters so trivial as the mode of spelling the name of Christ or their way of crossing themselves.

The new sectarianism is entirely different. It evidently springs from the direct influence of the Gospel, and it is remarkable for its uniformity. It is the return to the simple creed of the early Christians, for which the Stundists are

striving, so that one can say that this religious sect represents the type of the religious aspirations of modern reformers. The religious doctrine of the Stundists is much akin to that of the Baptists or Anabaptists of the time of the Reformation. They baptize only grown-up people, re-baptizing those to whom this sacrament was administered in babyhood. Instead of the communion they have simply "the breaking of bread," accompanied with singing of hymns. The wedding ceremony exists, but is a very plain one. Both communion and baptism are viewed by the Stundists, not as sacraments, but as "rites performed in commemoration of Christ, and for a closer union with Him." They consider the *Ikons* as no better than pictures, and do not keep them in their houses. They recognize only the Lord's Prayer. At their meetings they sing hymns of their own composition and psalms. As to prayers, they are left to the personal inspiration of the believers.

As regards their moral code, suffice it to say that it is prohibited among them to ill-use even dumb creatures. An observer says that once he saw a girl of eight, a Stundist, who rushed into the house, saying, with an appear-

ance of great distress, that she could not restrain her little brother—a boy three years old—from throwing stones at a dog. The Stundists, like all Ruthenians or Southern Russians, hold land as private property, not in common, like the great Russians. Among the Stundists there is no conscious leaning towards collective ownership of land. But according to their religion, all earthly goods are not given, but, so to say, *lent* by God to men, who will be held responsible before Him for the use they have made of their worldly possessions. To prove faithful debtors men are bound to come to the assistance of their neighbours when they are in need, sickness, or affliction. It is well known that with the Stundists this doctrine is in no contradiction with their life, but on the contrary their lives are a confirmation and illustration of their doctrine.

One of the peculiarities of the Stundists is the perfect absence of national and religious intolerance. During the anti-Jewish riots the Stundists used all their influence to restrain the Orthodox from committing any outrage. There were no anti-Jewish riots in the villages where the Stundists formed even one-third of the population. Riabashapka, a common peasant, one of the

founders of the sect, delivered several sermons upon the subject. In one of them (recorded *verbatim* by a lady who was present), Riabashapka said to his congregation: "The Jews have received from God a law for their guidance. When they transgressed it He punished them. Perhaps they are suffering now for their own sins. You have heard how they are beaten, ruined, plundered. But God preserve you, brothers and sisters, from participating, even in thought, in such deeds. The Jews are the eldest sons of God. He punishes them more severely than the others. But woe to the man who will take upon himself to be the instrument of God's wrath! God preserve you from wishing it, and still more from taking part in these violences."

With regard to politics, the views of the present Stundists are easily formulated; they think that one must obey the authorities in everything, except in matters pertaining to religion. To show how peaceful is their disposition, it is enough to mention that at the close of their meetings they always pray for the Tzar. However one may dislike it, this is a fact which must be acknowledged by every impartial and honest investigator who has personally been with these sectarians.

It is evident that the Stundists are a perfectly harmless body, which does not threaten existing institutions, and even may be said to help in the preservation of public order by dissuading people from anti-Jewish outrages, by preaching against all sorts of bloodshed, rebellion, and resistance by violence. Besides, this sect is one of the most powerful instruments of a peaceful Russification of the heterogeneous population of our border provinces. The Stundists make converts not only among the Russians, but among the Moldavians, Gypsies, Tartars, Jews, and even Poles, and every new Stundist congregation falls necessarily under the influence of Russian culture. The Ruthenians understand easily the Russian language, and the Stundists read almost exclusively Russian books (Ruthenian ones are very rare). The Gospel is invariably read in the Russian version, as published by the Synod. Even the hymns of their own composition are written in the Russian language, with a few provincialisms. In any case, all Stundists, both men and women, are invariably taught to read and write, and they all read Russian.

Now let us see how the Russian Government has behaved towards this most sympathetic, promising, and genuinely popular movement.

During the reign of the "liberal" Alexander II. they were persecuted unremittingly. The regular tribunals, whenever called upon to judge the Stundists, invariably acquitted them. But it did not prevent the administration from arresting them again and again, keeping them in prison, imposing ruinous fines, and exiling them to Siberia.

At the beginning of the present reign the position of all sectarians, the Stundists included, improved. The service rendered by the Old Believers at the coronation could not be immediately forgotten, and the Stundists, with the other dissenters, benefited by that comparative tolerance. But the rapid spread of the sect, which was winning over hundreds of thousands of adherents from official orthodoxy, excited the jealousy of the clergy and alarmed the Government. It is rumoured that with Pobedonoszeff personal motives came to add to the irritation of a zealous upholder of orthodoxy.

To account for the latter we must throw a glance behind the scenes. It is known that in 1887 Mr. Pobedonoszeff was on the point of falling into disgrace. This was due to two circumstances. We will not dwell upon the first, as it is strictly private. Suffice it to say

that, thanks to a court intrigue we had better not mention, the Tzar was shown an authentic letter of Pobedonoszeff, in which the latter boasted that he could make his Master sign anything he wished. At the same time the Tzar was much incensed against Pobedonoszeff for his being worsted in polemics by the Evangelical Society.

The persecution of the Lutherans in the Baltic provinces caused the Evangelical Society to write an address to the Russian Holy Synod. Pobedonoszeff replied, but so poorly, that he exposed himself to a crushing rejoinder from the Evangelical Divine.

It was rumoured at this time that Pobedonoszeff would be dismissed altogether. He got a two months' furlough instead, to compose at his leisure a reply to the Evangelical pamphlet. He made no reply, but he got out of the difficulty by resorting to a trick very often practised in Russian official circles. Everything is forgiven there, and condoned for some zeal in the cause of autocracy. Pobedonoszeff contrived to make a show of this zeal at the expense of the Stundists. With the assistance of a South Russian Bishop, Nicanor, and a couple of paid scribes, he concocted against these inoffensive

people the accusation of being traitors to the Russian Tzars, and emissaries of Prince Bismarck and the German Lutheranism. Such was the purport of the famous "Letter from Simferopol," published in the *Moscow Gazette*, which, after Katkoff's death, became the organ of Pobedonoszeff.

The grounds for these sweeping accusations were as follows:—(1) This sect was founded by German Lutherans residing in Southern Russia; (2) the Stundists have in their houses the portraits of the Emperor William and of Prince Bismarck instead of the Tzar's; (3) they are wont to shave their beards in order to look like Germans.

It must be observed that all the Ruthenians are wont to shave their beards, the orthodox as well as sectarians. As to the obnoxious portraits, being comparatively educated people, who read the newspapers, they might well have portraits of men of prominence in European politics. As to the influence of the German Protestants (Baptists and not Lutherans), it was quite fortuitous, and disappeared after the first few years, the sect becoming thoroughly national.

The Stundists held a general council, and sent to the Synod a petition expressing their

wish to join officially the German sect of Baptists, which is fully tolerated in Russia. In fact, there is a great similitude in the rites of the two sects. As to the Stundist catechism, it was simply a translation of the catechism of the Tiflis Baptists.

As might have been expected, it was Pobedonoszeff who replied instead of the Synod. His reply was rough and peremptory. He begins by declaring that there is nothing in common between the Stundists and the Baptists, thus showing his complete ignorance of the tenets of both sects, and he finishes by ordering the Stundists not to trouble their superiors in the future.

Persecutions were resolved upon, and they broke out everywhere. The "missionaries" were personated by policemen, who broke into the houses of the brethren, dispersing their assemblies, arresting the peaceful Stundists, who were thrown into prisons, exiled to Siberia without trial, and treated like the worst criminals.

A Russian exile, whose name cannot be revealed, in his recollections published by the Friends of Russian Freedom, tells the following incident:—

"On the way to Kiev, two men in chains and with shaven heads were placed in our railway carriage; their wives accompanied them, one with four children, the other with three; the eldest boy was twelve years old. The appearance of these prisoners instantly attracted our attention; both of them had fine faces, and there was a quiet, straightforward look about them, which impressed us pleasantly.

"On seeing us, they at once asked us what we were, and when we answered, 'Socialists,' their faces brightened and they held out their hands to us, calling us brothers. They were members of the religious sect of *Stundists* or Evangelicals, and had been tried several years ago in the district of Chigirin, as being among the first promoters of heresy. Their sentence was: transport to the Caucasus and forfeiture of all civil rights (which accounted for their being shaven and chained). When the priest of their parish accused them of heresy, they were dragged, with blows and insults, through their village, and brought before the authorities. In prison they were treated with a barbarity worthy of the middle ages; the priest who had denounced them, struck them in the face, demanding the names of their co-religionists. While waiting

for trial, they were deprived of their one consolation, the Gospel, though by law every prisoner may possess it. On arriving at Kiev we bought a New Testament, and gave it to them with the consent of the official in charge. Their delight on receiving our present, and the passion with which they at once began their propaganda, was something to remember."

This statement is very valuable as a testimony of an eye-witness that Stundists are put in chains and have their heads shaven like the convicts in the mines. As to the fact that thousands of Stundists are exiled to Siberia and the Caucasus by mere administrative order, it needs no confirmation by an eye-witness, as it is admitted officially.

Not satisfied with direct persecutions, the police and the clergy are not ashamed to let loose upon the unfortunate Stundists the orthodox mob, which is encouraged and incited to commit the grossest outrages upon them. At the instigation and in the presence of priests, Stundists have been flogged over and over again by the orthodox peasants, to compel them to cross themselves, or drink brandy or smoke tobacco, or commit anything contrary to their creed or rules of life.

An English missionary whose name I cannot mention, as he has returned to Russia, told me cases where Stundists of the province of Kherson have been frozen to death by the orthodox, who in the heart of the winter poured water upon them by way of mock baptism.

George Lazarev has told in "Free Russia" the touching story of Elisey Sukhach, a Stundist whom he knew intimately, and whose story he heard from his own lips. Before being converted to the Stunda, Elisey was a fervid orthodox believer, much devoted to the interests of the Church and those of the village priest. His desertion irritated the latter exceedingly, and transformed his former good-will towards Elisey into violent hatred. The priest preached untiringly against him, denouncing him as an enemy of God whom it is sinful to leave unmolested. One of the most vehement of such sermons was delivered at the ceremony of the Benediction of Waters, which takes place on January 6th, when the frost is at its bitterest in Russia. The crowd got so excited that it rushed to the houses of the two Stundists, Elisey and another peasant, demolished their cottages, breaking to pieces every bit of furniture, and then dragged the two Stundists to the

river, where the priest was awaiting them. He began by asking them whether they abjured their heresy. On their making an open profession of their faith, he ordered them to be plunged into the ice-cold water through a hole made in the thick ice, repeating it three times, as is done at the baptism, and asking them each time whether they would abjure their heresy.

In the province of Kiev, the efforts on the part of the authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical, to arouse the wild beast in men brought forth fruit. The outrages committed there upon the innocent Stundist men and women defy description, and must be told in the victims' own words. At times they are so horrible that they cannot be told at all.

In September, 1892, the Stundists of one of the districts in the province of Kiev, sent to the Pennsylvanian Friends, and to several other bodies, whose addresses they obtained, a series of letters which are one wail of distress.

Having no one to defend them, they appeal to the public opinion of the distant world.

"We implore you, beloved brothers, with tears," begins the first letter, "take this account of ours or give it to somebody who can cry out

loudly, and perhaps people will hear us in our terrible distress. Because we are, as it were, stifled and cannot cry out ourselves, and awful and unspeakable is our distress."

This appeal bears the signature of all the members of the Stundists' community. Then come individual letters of those who have been especially victimized.

Elias Lisovoi writes as follows: "I declare to you, beloved brothers, what is done with us here. The elder of the village, the village constable (*uriadnik*), and other drunkards torment us pitilessly. Every day they send us to public works in Babenzy and in our village. And we, men, are sent out every night as watchmen. And these cruel drunkards—the village authorities—come to our houses whilst we are not in and frighten our children, and do evil things to our women. Late in the night, from September 11th to 12th, they came to my wife Xenia, and tormented her as they chose, as it is told in the Bible about Susan. Only they did worse. Protect us, O Lord! It is terrible even to speak of it. They threw her on the floor and then they outraged her. The drunken companions of the elder did it first and then the elder himself. Then they compelled her to make the sign of

the cross, threatening in case of refusal to outrage her again. They outraged the poor woman, and she was with child. They dislocated her hands, wounded her body, and left her almost dead. They broke all the plates and kitchen things and all the windows. Up to the present our houses are without windows.

"We beg you, brothers, with tears, help us. Do it as soon as you can. Do not make any delay. They are tormenting us so. We implore you with tears to take our cause to heart. Perhaps our Heavenly Father will help us and protect us in His mercy."

The signature follows.

This case is but a sample of the outrages endured by the Stundists during several months.

We have upon this a statement from the leaders and representatives of the Stundist Church, giving a detailed account of the barbarities committed, with names and details showing that the guilt cannot be laid to the charge of ignorant subordinate officials and their besotted assistants only.

The persecutions of the brethren in the village Kapustnizy began on August 17th, 1892, when the village authorities sent them in a body to forced labour on the public works, partly in

their own village, partly in Babenzy and Borshchagovka. They had to repair public buildings. The men did the wood-work, the women and children — some only ten and twelve years old—plastered the walls, worked the clay, etc. Many of the women had their babies with them, so that they had to carry on one arm the child, on the other a bundle of wood, and the overseers sometimes struck the poor women to make them work faster.

It was impossible to leave the little ones at home, as there is no one to look after them, and the people were sent to work at a distance of four or five miles from their houses.

In the evening all the men had to go as night watches for the whole night; and to every two of the brethren an orthodox overseer was told off to see that they never sat down to rest, but walked all the night through.

"On September 2nd, the ispravnik (chief of the police) of the Skviri district, the stanovoi, the uriadnik,[1] and the elder of the district, Pantelei Skribuk, came to our place, and the village priest exhorted us in their presence to

[1] Different officials.

renounce our creed. As we refused, the ispravnik gave orders that we should be sent for as night watches every night and two days in the week for public work. But we were sent to public work every day. Up to the 16th of September we were employed for 106 days and 116 nights.

"On the 6th of September the priest came to the village school, and, having summoned us, began to persuade us once again to repent and baptize our children—to go to the orthodox church. But we did not consent.

The same evening the village elder, Emelian Ocheretnuk, the *sotsky*, Avila Shlapan, with a batch of about eight men, all drunk, came to the house of Kerik Zubko, where they behaved most disgracefully, abusing his wife, shouting, making great noise, and filling the room with tobacco smoke. Then they went to the other Stundists, Elias and Dolman Lisovoi, Paraskovia Panchenko, and others, and were guilty of similar improprieties everywhere.

On the 7th the local uriadnik, the elder, and the sotsky, with a crowd of drunken peasants, came late in the night to the house of the brother Zubko, the uriadnik shouting, "Open the door, or I will break the window." And

although his wife hurried to light a lamp and open the door, a window was broken before she could let them in. On entering the room they began to smoke, make an uproar, and sing indecent songs. The uriadnik abused Zubko's wife, threatening to cut her to pieces if she refused to be converted. He called her abusive names, undid her hair, and knocked her down.

In the same way they made the round of all the houses of the Stundists, ill-treating the women, who were alone in the houses, their husbands being in the other villages as watchmen.

On the 11th of September, late in the night, the same drunken crowd, with the elder and the sotsky at their head, broke into the house of Kerik Zubko, who was absent on night watch, and the elder shouted to Zubko's wife to make a sign of the cross like an orthodox. As she kept silent he pulled her by the hair, and covered her with blows till she lost her senses. Then they went to the house of Elias Lisovoi, living with his brother Nicholas, who is an orthodox. Elias was out as a night-watch, and his brother Nicholas was in the prairie."

Having ascertained that there were no men

in the house, the elder and the drunken rabble with him lost all restraint, and committed upon the defenceless women the worst outrages, aggravated with such insults as cannot be described in any civilized language.

The account we have mentioned gives the names of the seven men who either took part in these abominations or witnessed them, and also the name of those who have heard the priest of the village encouraging the elder and his gang to "make it hot" for the Stundists, and promising to pay for their tobacco and *vodka* to make the game more exciting. And these incitements, appealing to the brutal instincts of the mob, came not from the village priests alone. Upon this important point we have the unimpeachable testimony of one of the disciples of Count Tolstoi, Prince Khilkov, whose exile to the Caucasus was reported some time ago in the English papers.

Prince Khilkov belongs to the high aristocracy of Russia, his family descending in direct line from the house of Rurik, which reigned over Muscovy up to the end of the sixteenth century. Having completed his studies at the military academy of St. Petersburg, the young prince rapidly advanced in his career, owing to his

great connections, wealth, and abilities. He was the youngest general in the army, having outstripped all his comrades, and a brilliant career was opening before him, when he was converted to Tolstoi's ideas, and abandoned the military service as contrary to the Christian religion. He did more. On coming to his estate in the province of Kharkov, he made a present to the peasants of his lands, forests, and meadows, and began to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow like a common peasant. To all who were curious to know what was the meaning of these extraordinary proceedings, he was quite willing to explain his new creed, which was that of the author of "Christ's Christianity." The Government—which has not the courage to persecute Count Tolstoi himself — meanly attacks his disciples. Prince Khilkov was exiled by administrative order to the Caucasus, where he now is. Copies of the Stundists' letters to the American Friends were sent to him there, and caused him to write to the Governor of the province of Kiev, in which these disgraceful outrages took place, and to the Archbishop of Kharkov, Ambrosius, who made himself conspicuous in the general campaign against the Stundists.

I will quote a passage only from the second of these letters, which bears upon the attitude of the clergy high and low :—

"Your reverence, every public man is pleased to see the fruits of his activity," the letter begins. "Now your reverence can see full well what fruits your activity has borne. The reiterated appeals of your reverence, and of other 'shepherds' like yourself, whose characteristics are given in the tenth chapter of St. John, has found an echo in the hearts of the rural police in the province of Kiev. You may rejoice! The proclamations affixed by your order to the walls of the churches, inciting one section of the population to hate the other; pamphlets like 'That accursed Stundist' (*Proklyatei Stundist*), which is so zealously distributed by your reverence; the sermons, appealing to hatred and intolerance, preached by yourself and your followers—all this has at last done what it was meant to do. Houses have been destroyed; people have been tormented in every possible way. The new champions of orthodoxy have devised a novel means for compelling the women to make the sign of the cross! Shame and abomination! At the judicial inquiry the inferior agents alone

will probably be found guilty. But who was it incited these inferior agents?

"In the village Pavlovky (district of Sumy), the *stanovoi*, together with the dean and two priests, were reproaching the peasants at the meeting of the *Mir* for their tolerating the Stundists in their midst. 'In other places in Russia they are torn to pieces,' said these worthies, alluding probably to the province of Kiev, and evidently wishing that the example of Babenzy should be followed in their district. Is not this a direct incitement—'to tear them to pieces'? Fortunately, the peasants of Pavlovky, thanks to the newly-awakened faith in Christ, are no longer capable of heeding such incitements."

By the newly-awakened faith in Christ, Prince Khilkov evidently means the adhesion to his own creed. The village of Pavlovky is close to his own estate. His information is first-hand, and cannot be doubted any more than his statements as regards the activity of the archbishop of his province.

But does the responsibility stop at men like Ambrosius and Nicanor—who are most conspicuous in hunting down the Stundists? Certainly not. The bishops take their cue from

the central Government, and their immediate chief, Pobedonoszev, the confidential adviser of the Tzar. These two men have to share between them the disgrace of these abominations.

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